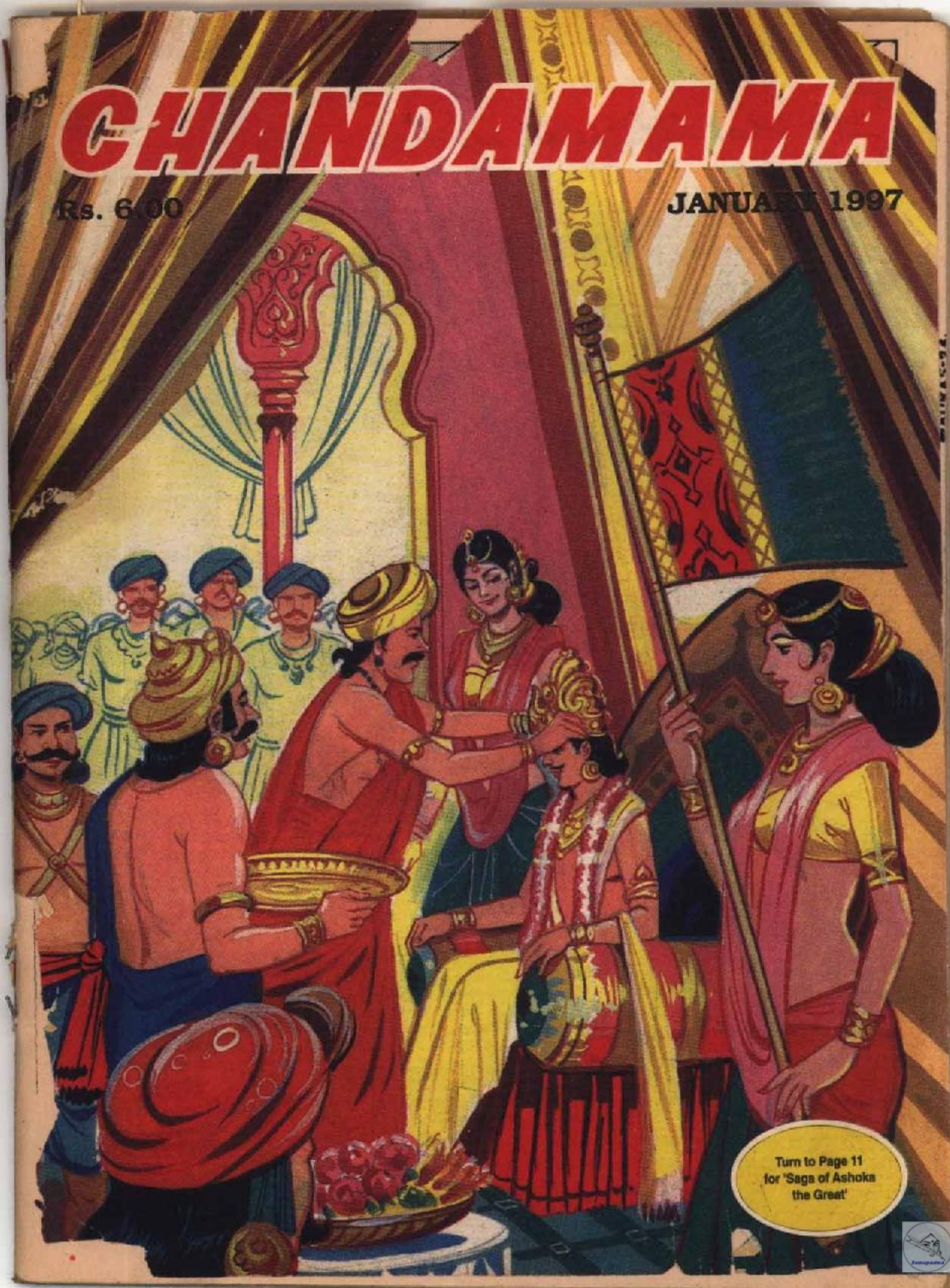


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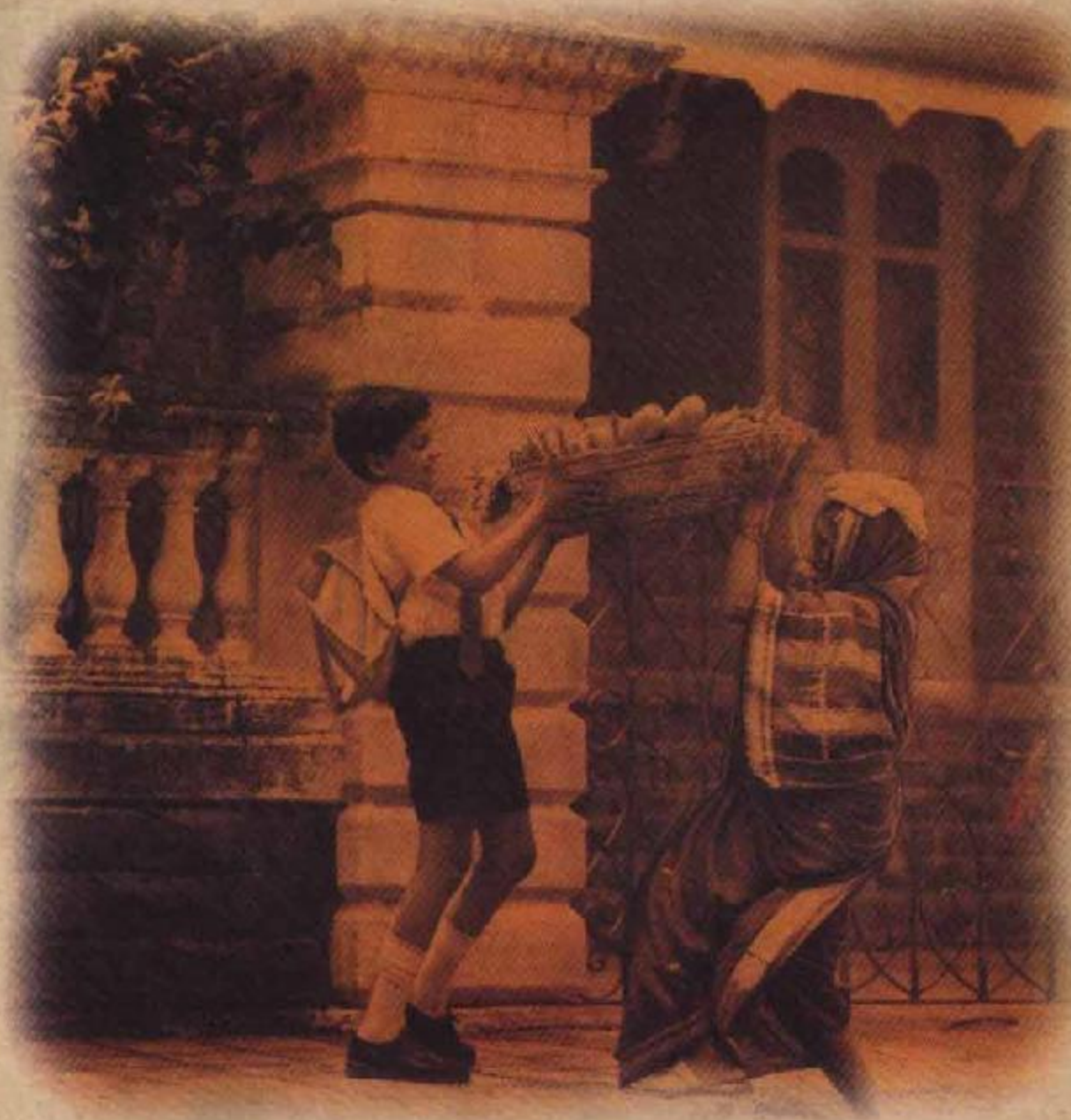
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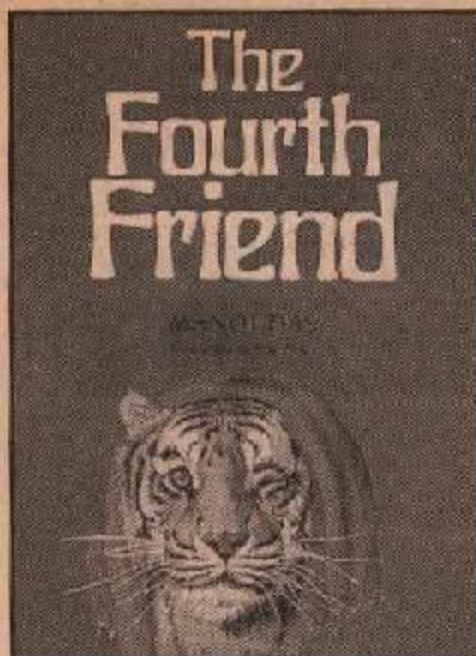
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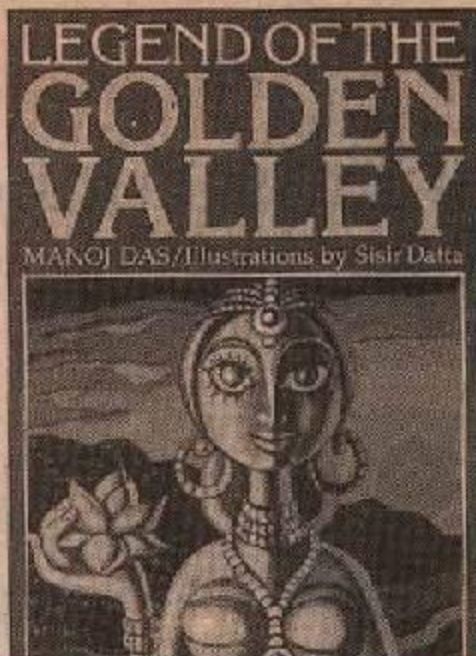
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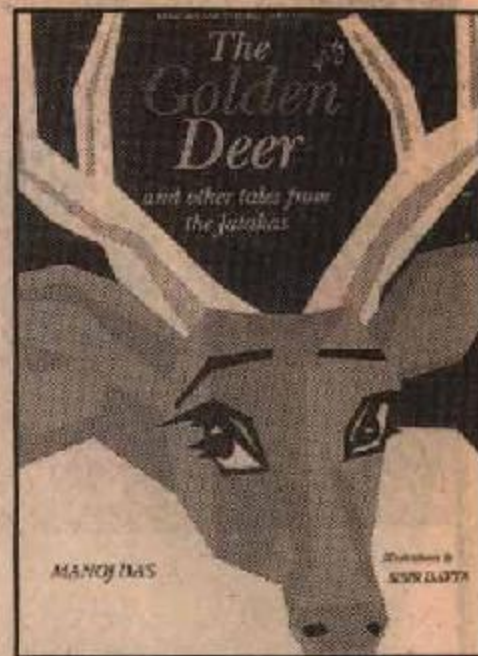




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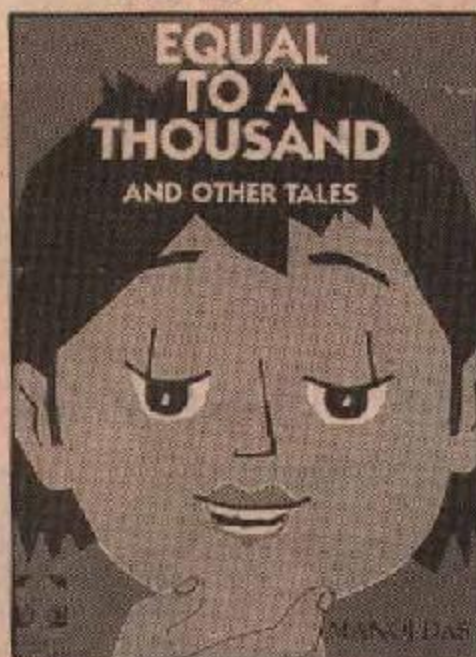
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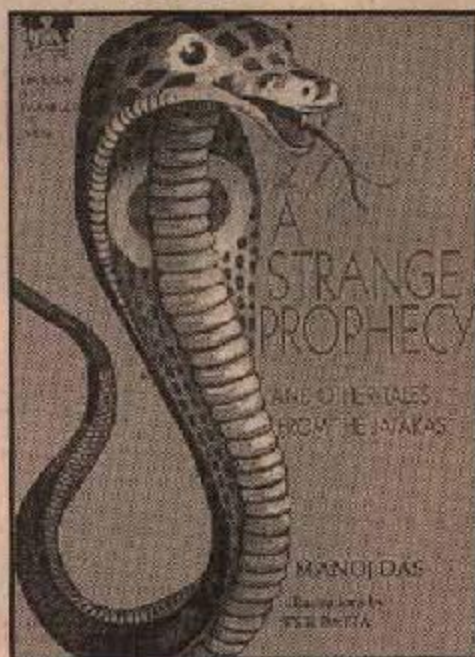
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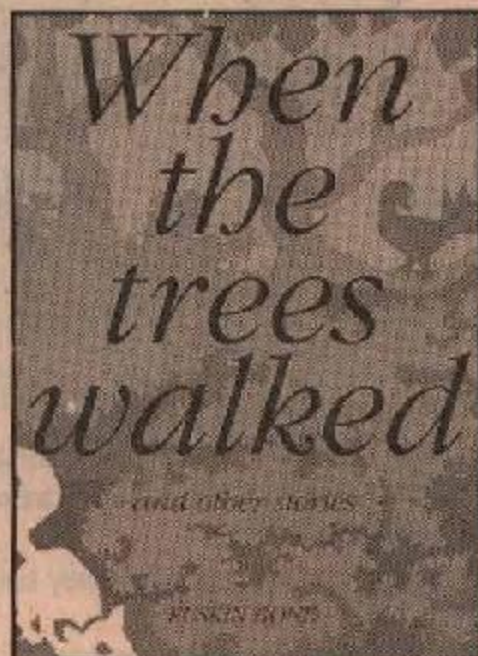


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**SAGA OF ASHOKA THE GREAT:** Ashoka leads his great army to conquer Kalinga. It is a terrible war. He faces unexpected resistance. Toshali, the beautiful capital of Kalinga, is in ruins.

**MAHABHARATA:** The spies of Duryodhana have been unable to trace the Pandavas. Both Bhishma and Kripacharya advise Duryodhana to hand over Hastinapura back to the Pandavas when they return and claim their rightful inheritance. The alternative will be war, they warn him. The news of the death of Kichaka reaches Hastinapura. Now is the time to attack the Matsya kingdom. They get Susarma, the King of Trikartha, to attack the capital of Matsya. King Virata is captured. Yudhishtira asks Bhima to rescue their friend, Virata. He does that and captures King Susarma. Duryodhana now attacks Matsya from the rear. Prince Uttara, Virata's son, is ready to defend the capital, but he wants a capable charioteer. Arjuna in the guise of the dance teacher, Brahannala, offers his help.

**SAGES OF INDIA:** Balakhilyas is a strange hermit with tremendous powers.

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## Politics in Schools

Children and parents in general have reason to remember the year 1996 for a long time to come. One of the high courts in the land, in a historic judgement, banished 'politics' from the campuses of schools. It has asked political parties to keep off schools. Indications are that parents in other States, too, propose to approach their respective courts for a similar verdict.

What was being noticed in recent years in India is, at the time of elections to students parliaments and unions, some of the national political parties were 'sponsoring' candidates, with large-scale assistance in the shape of handbills, posters, banners, vehicles, and even money. What should have otherwise been simple campaigning was turning out to be strongly fought out and hard-won elections, with the prospect of violence at the time of jubilation and later when the unions held meetings.

School authorities have invariably been passive eye-witnesses to all these goings on—especially those outside their campuses, while parents tore their hair when they found that their wards were left with little or no time to study at school or at home.

True, students organisations are meant to bring out and sharpen leadership qualities in children, but they forget that all those who aspire to become leaders have to win the confidence of others by exhibiting their excellence in studies and in sports and games conducted by the schools, and not by the number of handbills distributed, posters pasted, banners hung, and of meetings held to promote their candidature.

Of course, the primary responsibility lies with the students themselves to ensure that schools remain hallowed premises where they go for enriching their knowledge.

*Chandamama wishes its readers a very happy NEW YEAR*



## THE SEVEN SISTERS OF THE GULF

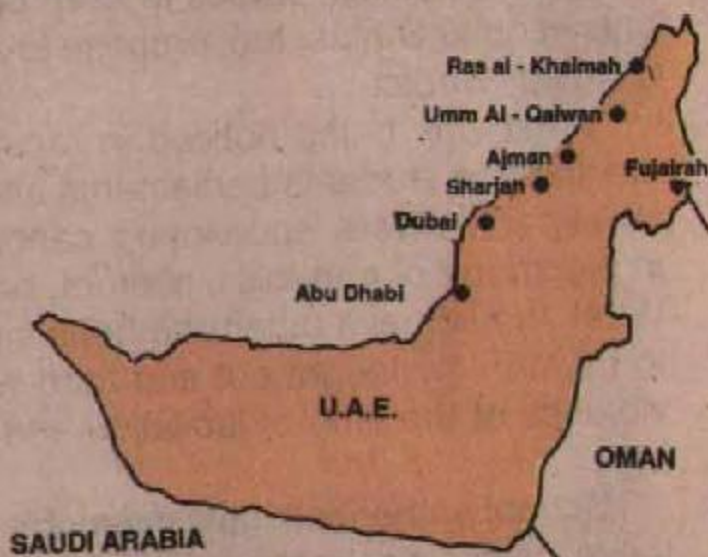
Students of Indian history must be familiar with the Seven Sisters of the north-east. They would be interested to know that there are seven "sisters" around the Persian Gulf also. They are jointly known as the United Arab Emirates or the U.A.E. These seven sisters are, from north to south, Ras al-Khaimah, Umm al-Qaiwan, Ajman, Sharjah, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi on the western side and Fujairah on the opposite side. The Emirates celebrated the Silver Jubilee of their formation on December 2.

These seven nations, more than a century-and-a half ago, were known as the Trucial States, as they had treaty relations with Britain which had signed agreements with the local rulers called Sheikhs. One of them—Sheikh Zayed bin Khalifa Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi—enjoyed the longest reign, from 1855 to 1909. The present U.A.E. President's brother, Sheikh Shakhbut, ascended the throne in 1928. The younger brother, Sheikh Zayed, was spending the days roaming the desert. He was asked by the ruler to guide the British oil divining teams around the desert, which he successfully did. He thus acquired a wide knowledge of the oil industry and realised how it could guide the destiny of his country.

Sheikh Shakhbut added to his responsibilities by making him his representative in the eastern region. Sheikh Zayed converted Al Ain into an agricultural land, which brought in social changes in the life of the people of that area. On August 6, 1966 he was chosen

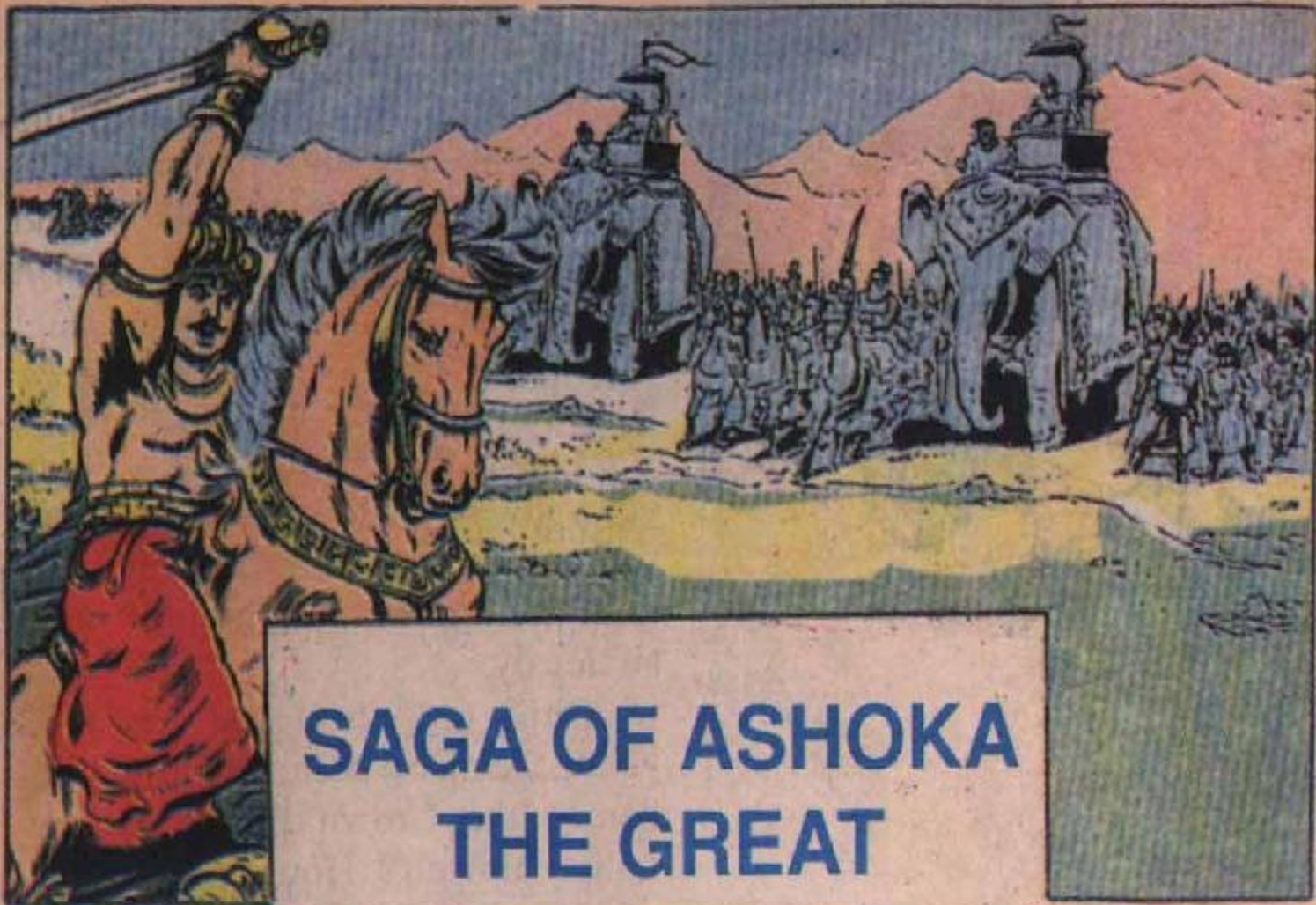
as the ruler of Abu Dhabi. Apart from other social welfare measures, he diverted the wealth coming from oil for the development of the country.

Britain now wanted to withdraw its troops from the Gulf. With that, the treaties, too, came to an end. Sheikh Zayed prompted the rulers of other six Gulf states to form a Federation. On July 18, 1971 they took the historic decision to create a federal state to be called the United Arab Emirates. Four months later, on December 2, the constitution came into force and Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan of Abu Dhabi was elected President. He has been re-elected to the post at 5-year intervals.



Ever since its formation, the seven countries of the Federation have been developing fast in every sphere of human activity. For instance, there were only 147 schools in 1971, and no professional college or university. Today, there are more than 900 schools. There is also a medical college. The Emirates University in Al Ain, founded in 1977, has nearly 15,000 students, some of them from other countries. Literacy is about 84 per cent. Children in the U.A.E. enjoy a high level of health—the highest among all Middle East countries, according to the 1996 UNICEF Report.





## SAGA OF ASHOKA THE GREAT

*(The story so far: King Vindusara of Magadha dies when, of his many sons, the two contenders for the throne, Sushima and Ashoka, are away. Being the eldest, Prince Sushima has a claim to the throne, but he is selfish and cruel and that is why nobody likes him. Prince Ashoka has proved his merit as an administrator. Everything now depends on who reaches Pataliputra first. Ashoka achieves that, arriving with his army to light his father's funeral pyre, while Sushima, partly because of his laziness and partly because of a deception played on him through two dancing girls sent by Yasa, Ashoka's friend, does not turn up. Sushima's other brothers and friends who try to stop Ashoka from performing the last rites of his father are killed by Ashoka's friends and army.)*

**T**he sorrow that had engulfed the city of Pataliputra because of King Vindusara's death, deepened when the news of the death of the king's several sons spread. But people realised that none but the princes themselves were to be blamed for the tragedy.

At midnight Prince Ashoka was vested with the royal authority. He sat on the throne, but did not wear the crown. He declared that he was himself not happy the way he ascended the throne. Coronation, that

is why, should wait.

Ministers and nobles appreciated Ashoka's attitude. But nobody was at peace. Who knew what would be Prince Sushima's move?

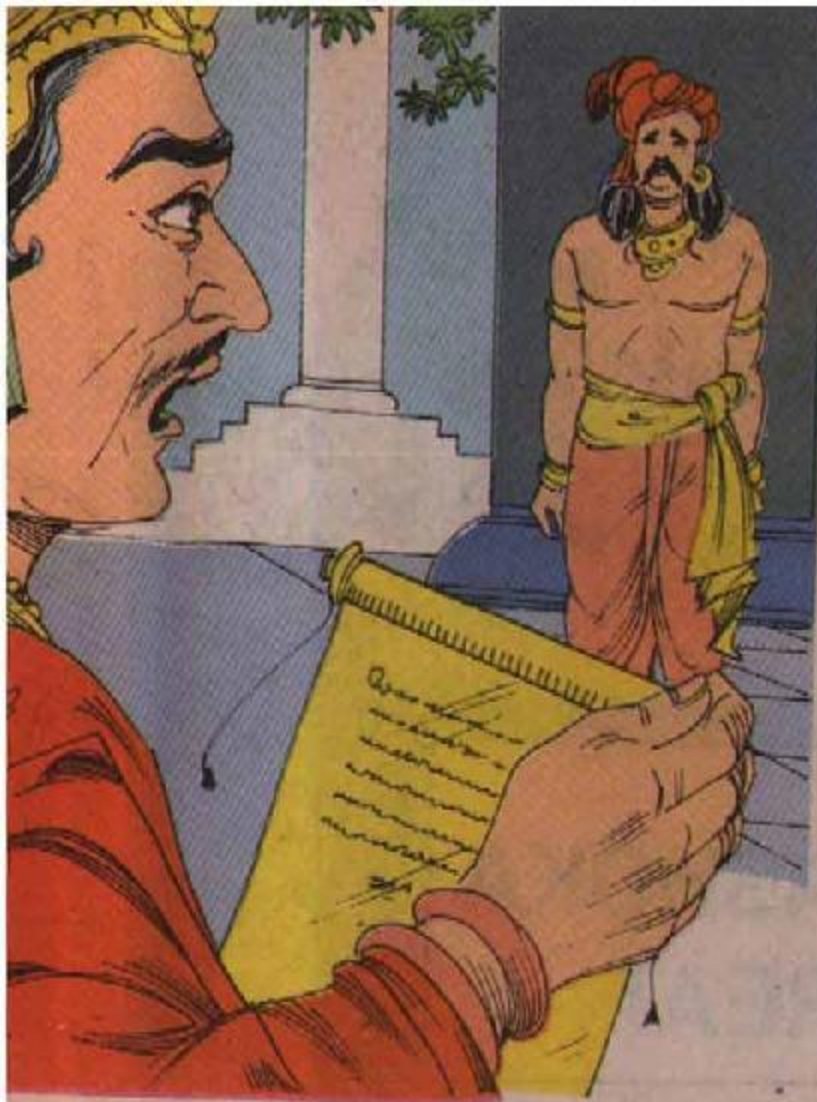
But, at Taxila, Prince Sushima was still idling away his time, certain that his only rival to the throne, Prince Ashoka, was lying at Ujjain, paralysed. He had been naive enough to take as true the yarn spun by the two dancing girls.

It was once again a message from his mother, the chief queen of King

### 12. A NEW QUEEN FOR CORONATION







Vindusara, that woke him up to the reality. If the queen had earlier asked him to reach the capital at once because the king was critically ill, she was now advising him against approaching the city. From the fate of the other princes, she could apprehend what might happen to her son!

The messenger, apart from giving Prince Sushima the queen's letter, reported to him all about the anxious moments preceding the king's funeral, Ashoka's arrival, and the bloody battle between his army and the princes who envied him, resulting in the death of the princes.

Sushima gave out a loud yell of anger and frustration. "I'll throttle the

servant-girl's son to an instant death!" he shrieked out. "Where are my bodyguards? Go and tell the captains of my battalions to get ready immediately to march upon Pataliputra."

"But, O Prince, hasn't the great queen, your noble mother, advised you to stay put? Perhaps she will let you know when the time is propitious for you to proceed to the capital!" said the messenger, humbly and anxiously.

"Shut up!" hollered Ashoka, giving the man a push. "Hadn't I been named the Crown Prince by my father himself? How could those mischievous nobles ignore me simply because I was late for the funeral? It is the doing of that wicked Prime Minister of my father, Khallataka. He shall be the first man to fall to my sword!"

When the reports reached Pataliputra that Prince Sushima was heading towards the capital with all the soldiers who had been stationed at Taxila under his command, the ministers and nobles became pensive. Ashoka summoned them to an emergency conference.

"What's your advice?" he asked.

They kept quiet.

"My friends and counsellors, is this the time to keep mum?" Ashoka said, taking them to task.

"My lord! For us and for all practical purposes, you're the king.



The decision to delay your coronation was yours, not ours. Now, what is the course of action for a king when he is confronted by an enemy?" asked Prime Minister Khallataka, and he looked at the other ministers.

"To fight!" answered the other ministers in one voice.

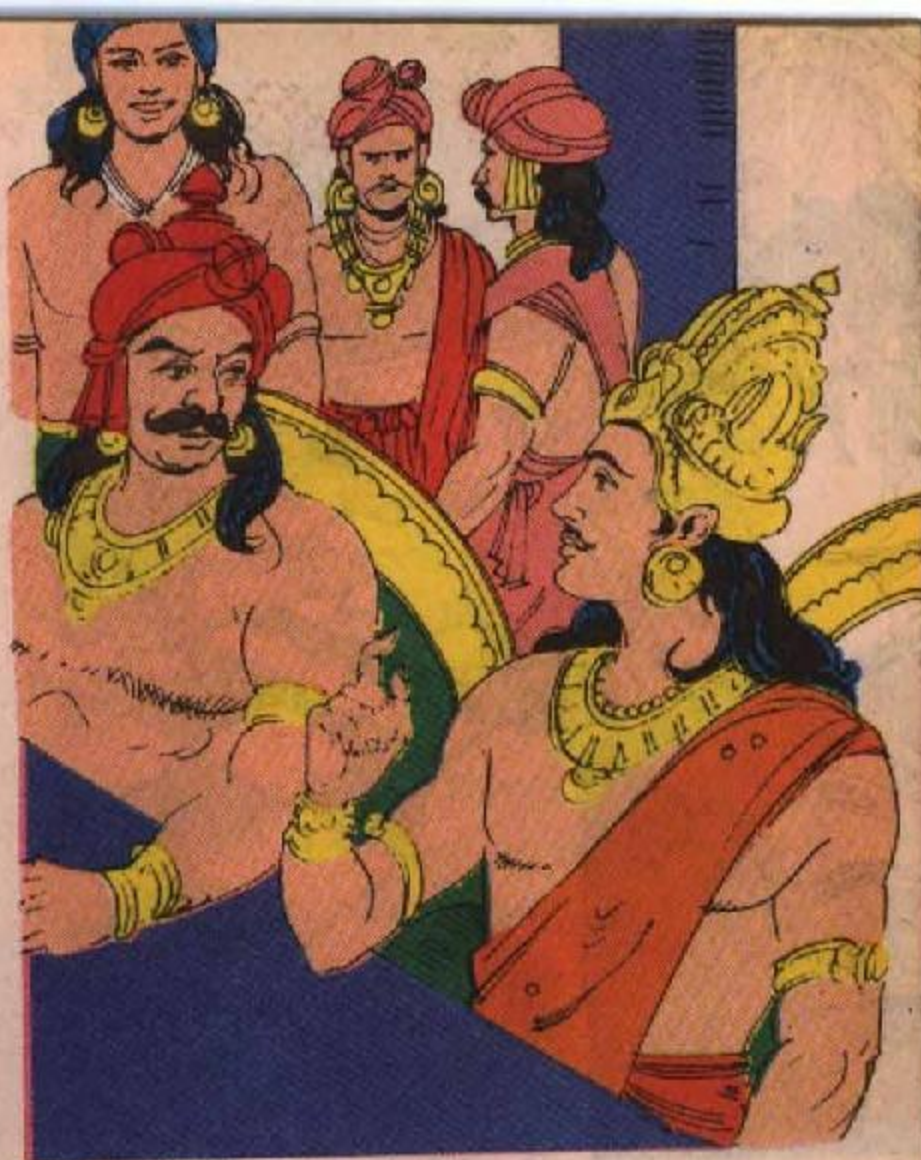
"Thank you. But I would like to give Sushima a chance. He can continue to be at Taxila as the governor – our viceroy – if he retreats peacefully," said Ashoka.

"My lord, I do not think he will be content with the position of a subordinate. In no time will he declare independence. That, I'm afraid, might set an example for other regional rulers of our great empire," said one of the ministers.

After a brief silence, Khallataka said, "What the minister said is quite probable. But noble is the sentiment of our king. Prince Sushima should be given a chance to choose peace. If he retreats to Taxila, it is good for the time being. As soon as we receive some intelligence that he is conspiring against the king or if he announces his decision to secede, he can be cut to size."

"But how to present the proposal to him? He may simply march into the city in his bid to enter the palace!" wondered Ashoka.

Said Khallataka: "Since I have proposed peace, I must take upon myself the task of meeting Prince



Sushima. I propose erecting a welcome-arch at the entrance into the city. I will stand there with a garland in hand. Except for a few elderly nobles, no armed soldiers should be around me. The prince will understand that we the old ones can only talk and not fight! As soon as he stops, I will garland him and put forth the proposal of peace."

"My brave and learned Prime Minister! I'm overwhelmed by your gestures. But I fear for your life," observed Ashoka.

"I'm of course taking a grave risk. But if I fall to Sushima's sword, I would meet that end for the sake of the empire. Prince Sushima would gain nothing by killing me. He would







"Is that so, Maharaj?" There was no smile on Marthand's face. "Ever since the baby came, her mother has been ill, and I'm worried about her health. That's why I want you to look into the baby's horoscope and tell me what her fate is going to be. Also, when her mother will recover from her illness."

Goswami Maharaj pulled out a neat bundle of palmyrah leaves from his bag and untied it on the table. He then began drawing a diagram and writing some letters and figures in the columns, all the while making some calculations by his fingers. "There's no immediate cause for worry, Commander, though it may take some time for the mother to recover fully. I

suggest that you make a special offering to goddess Lokeshwari, and she will certainly bless both mother and daughter. How's your son?"

"By the grace of Lokeshwari, he's hale and healthy," replied Marthandvarma, "I only hope his mother will be all right by the time we celebrate his third birthday."

"When will that be?" queried the astrologer.

"That'll come off in another two months," replied the Commander. "You must join us in the celebrations."

Goswami Maharaj accepted the invitation and took leave of Marthandvarma.



The birthday of young Vijaykrishna was *not* celebrated because his mother passed away suddenly. Goswami Maharaj attributed the tragedy to the malefic influences of the planets at the time of the birth of Vajreshwari — that was the name given to Marthandvarma's baby daughter — and realised that she would have to grow without the care and affection of a mother.

King Soorasen and Queen Suryaprabha decided that they would send one of the senior maids-in-waiting to the Army Commander's residence to take care of the baby.



The next three or four years were uneventful for Veerpuri. King Soorasen thought it prudent to give





had fallen ill; her physicians said that she was not in a position to undertake a long and arduous journey.

But the coronation could not wait any longer. The auspicious time the astrologers had determined would not occur again before another five years. And there can be no coronation without the queen beside the king.

"My lord, pardon me, but I must suggest that you should take another wife. That's the only solution to the problem. We understand that your son, Prince Mahindra, is being educated in keeping with Buddhist lore. Even if Princess Vidisha were to give birth to other sons, they too may go the same way. A prince who does not believe in war cannot defend an empire when the need arises. Better you have a son or two by another queen," proposed Radha-

gupta, the new Prime Minister.

Ashoka was not yielding to the suggestion, but Yasa came with a message from Vidisha Devi, urging him to marry again, for she would never be able, mentally and physically, to discharge the duties of the consort of a reigning monarch. Ashoka at last took another wife, Asandhimitra, and the coronation was performed with great pomp and show.

But he could not forget Princess Vidisha and their two children. He often felt depressed. Though nobody suspected his ability as a ruler, he paid the least attention to the business of state.

"Our king is missing his first wife Vidisha Devi so much that one day he might leave the throne for the sake of living a quiet, peaceful life





with her. He must be given a taste of real power and pride of a king. That can come only from victories in battles. Nothing is as exciting as standing triumphant amidst the dead bodies of the vanquished," one day Prime Minister Radhagupta told the General of the army, Virsingh. They discussed the issue for a long time.

Just then reports reached them that the King of Kalinga had died without leaving any heir behind him. A council of rulers were ruling the land.

"The only kingdom which both the mighty Chandragupta and his worthy heir Vindusara desired to conquer, but did not risk a war against it, is Kalinga. It is a strange land, prosperous through its commerce with the distant islands of Bali and Sumatra and strong because of the unity among the several dynasties ruling the small territories under a liberal king. But with the king gone, the unity is bound to disappear. This is the golden moment for leading an

expedition against it," the Prime Minister told King Ashoka, in the presence of the General.

Ashoka needed a diversion; it was necessary for him to take up a task that would need all his attention.

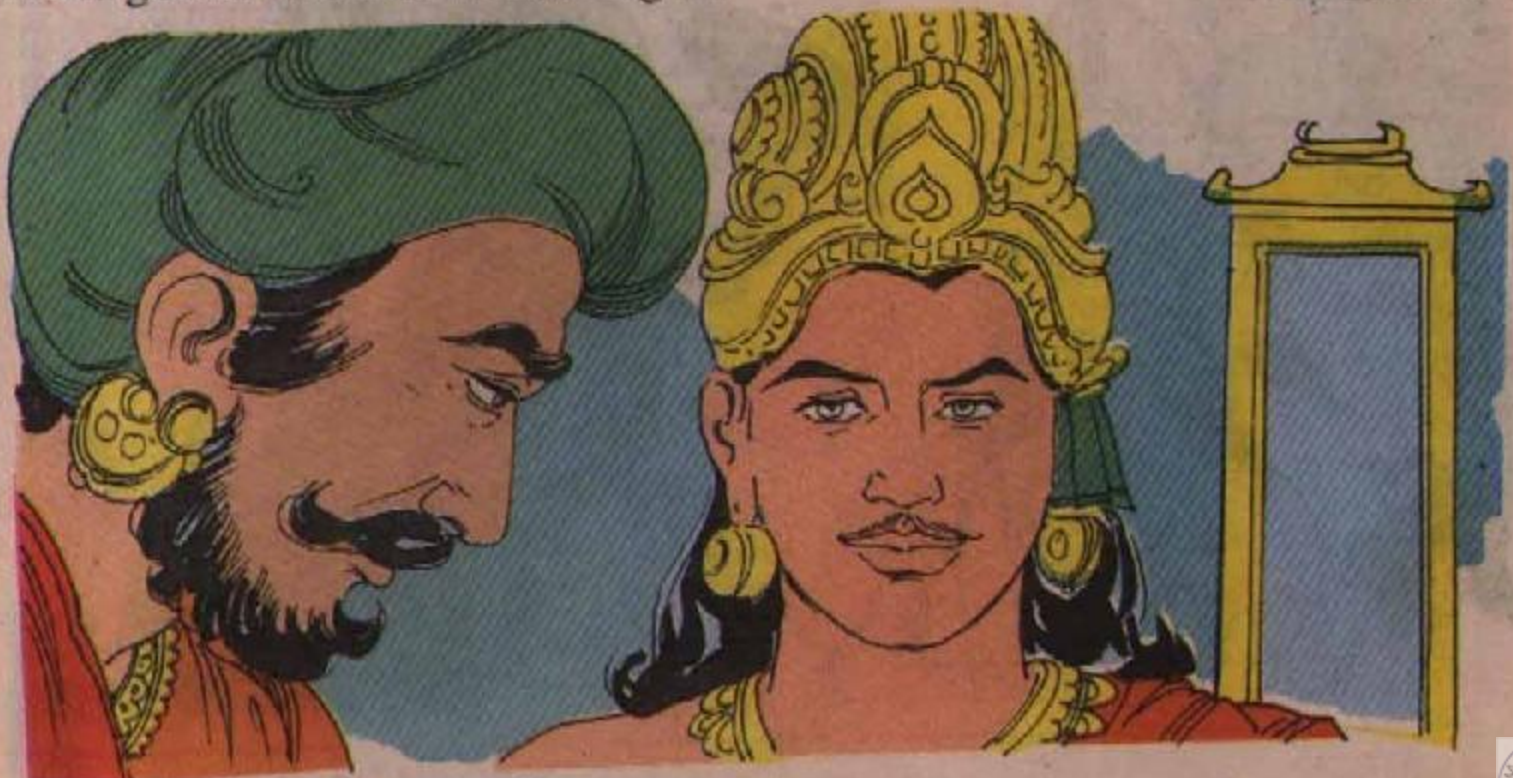
"Our army has not fought any battle for years. It will rust unless it is put to some challenging military exercise. Otherwise we will be in danger if attacked," added the General.

"Make the necessary arrangements for an expedition against Kalinga. But, to begin with, send as many spies as you can into that land. Their purpose should be two-fold: to gather intelligence about the strength and weakness of the land, and to spread suspicion among the different ruling dynasties," said Ashoka.

"It is wise of you to pass this instruction," said the Prime Minister.

Before long Magadha was ready to launch a great military expedition.

—To continue





# PROMISES KEPT



**D**harmapal was the King of Dharmapuri. The kind-hearted king was generous in his administration, and his subjects were all praise for him. Dharmapal had only one worry; he was aware that Simharaya, the ruler of the neighbouring Simhapuri, was only waiting for an excuse to launch an attack on Dharmapuri.

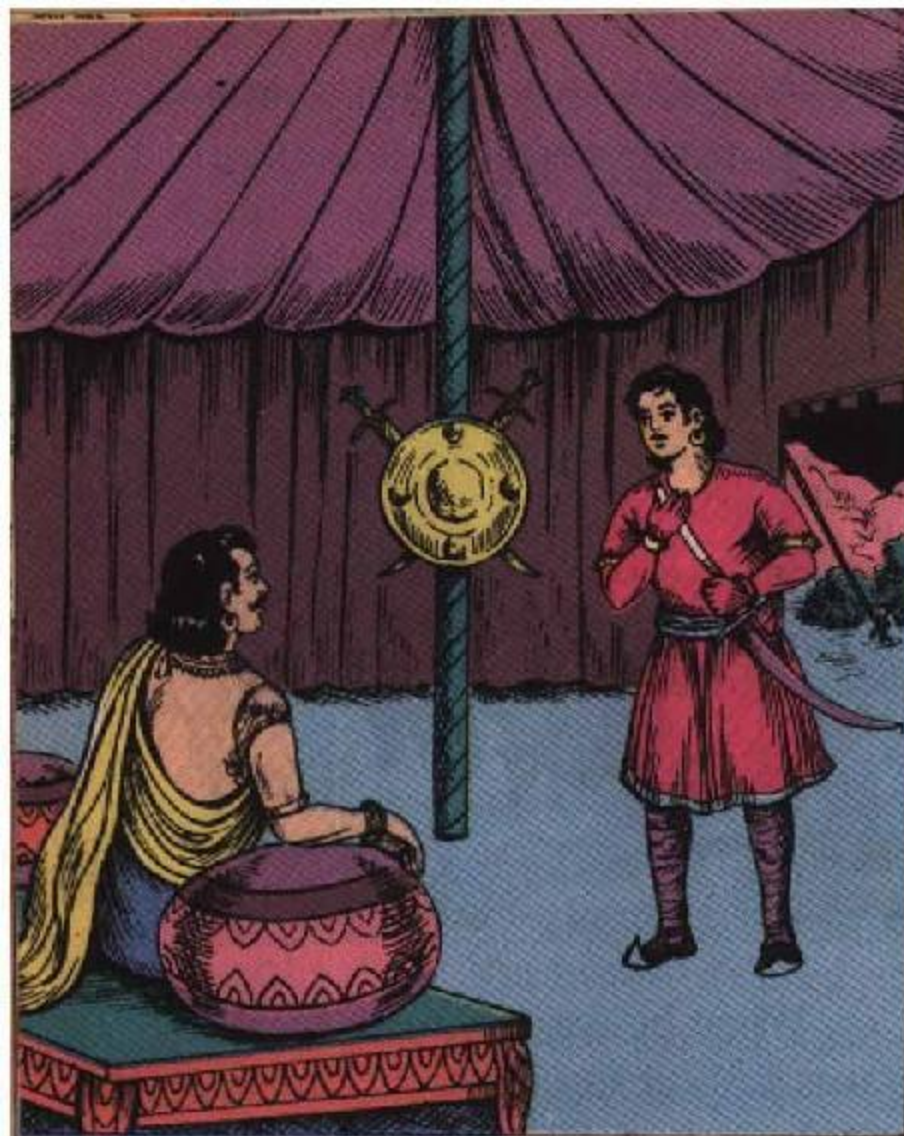
The long-standing state of confrontation often distracted Dharmapal, who always contemplated how to bring about an atmosphere of cordiality between the two kingdoms. He really wished to avoid a war and thought of ways to establish peace. He sent an emissary to Simhapuri, but Simharaya did not accept the terms of truce. He slowly strengthened his army, so that he could strike at an opportune moment.

When he was sure that his army was fully ready to fight, Simharaya laid siege to Dharmapuri. Fighting raged on the first day and the two armies tried to match themselves against each other. On the second day, Dharmapal was injured on the battlefield and he was removed to his tent, where his wounds were attended to. It was certain that he could no longer fight, at least for some days.

Dharmapal was crestfallen. 'What a pity that I can't lead my army to the battlefield!' he moaned in his bed. 'If I don't lead the soldiers, they'll lose their morale.' He walked up and down immersed in thoughts about the strategy to be adopted. He was surprised when he saw a young soldier entering his tent. He bowed low and said, 'Your majesty, I'm one of the new







recruits to your army. My name is Amarsingh. I heard that your majesty has been wounded. Perhaps your majesty cannot go to the battle front in the next few days. I've therefore come to seek your permission to engage King Simharaya in a face-to-face fight. I'm confident that I'll succeed. Please grant me permission, your majesty."

Dharmapal looked at him in wonder. Just a soldier, yet he was exuding confidence that he would be able to kill King Simharaya! Was it ever possible? "Do you think you can accomplish what you state?" said the king unbelievably. "Simharaya has come with a strong army. How then can you confront him all alone and engage him in a fight? Have you adequate

experience for achieving that? Perhaps you're over-confident, aren't you?"

"Your majesty, I've acquired enough experience," replied the soldier. "My grandmother used to tell me stories of heroic deeds. I used to dream of becoming a hero myself. So, my aim is to seek an opportunity to achieve my ambition in life."

Dharmapal was now more or less convinced that the soldier was at least sincere. "All right. And if you achieve your mission, what do you wish by way of remuneration?"

"That I shall tell you, your majesty, after I kill Simharaya," the young man said, proudly.

"As you wish," responded King Dharmapal. "I give you my permission, if you assure me that you would kill Simharaya in single combat. Let me know how brave you are and how you keep your word."

As soon as the young soldier departed, the king sent for his commander and told him about the visit of Amarsingh. "He has given me his word that he would kill Simharaya. If he succeeds, then we shall ask him to lead the army against our enemy. What do you say?"

The commander only nodded his head and did not make any comments. On the third day, there were surprises one after the other. Amarsingh could be seen as lightning, fighting from every possible corner. No



soldier from Simhapuri could fight for long, before he fell a prey to Amarsingh's flashing sword. Whoever blocked his way met with his end in no time. Amarsingh was now nearing where the enemy commander was standing and watching his soldiers dying like fireflies. Soon, he too fell down dead when a strong blow from Amarsingh's sword hit him. The next victim was the charioteer of Simharaya. Soon it was the turn of Simharaya himself. His soldiers then ran helter-skelter, and not one could be seen on the battlefield.

Amarsingh made a triumphant entry into King Dharmapal's tent at the end of the day. "Congratulations Amarsingh! You've kept your word. Well done! Now tell me, how shall I reward you?"

"I wish to marry the princess, your

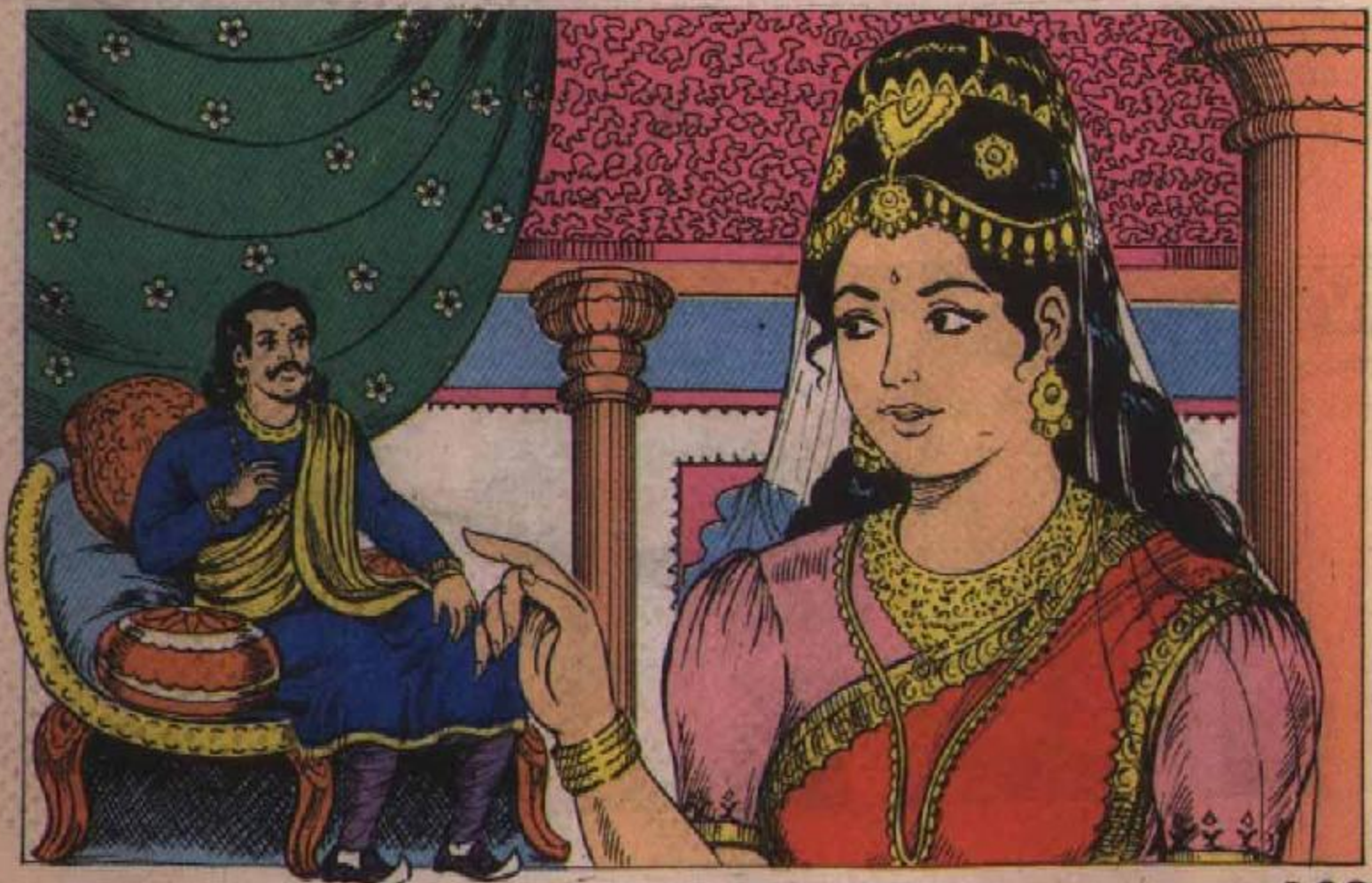
majesty!" said Amarsingh, unhesitatingly.

King Dharmapal had the shock of his life. Dharini was his only daughter and he was contemplating her marriage with the prince of Kuntapura. In fact, he had even given his word to that effect to the king. Dharmapal was now in a dilemma. He had also given his word to Amarsingh. How was he going to keep both promises?

The king was in deep thought for the next few days. He decided to seek his daughter's opinion. "You've heard of all that has happened, haven't you, Dharini? What shall we do?"

"Father, please don't worry," said Dharini reassuringly. "You've given your word about me to two persons, haven't you? I know how we can fulfil both promises. Leave that to me."

She went and confided in her





favourite maid Suvarna, who attired herself in the princess's clothes and ornaments. She now looked like a princess. Suvarna approached Amarsingh and introduced herself. "I'm the princess. I'm told that you wish to marry me. We haven't met before, so I thought I should get acquainted with you."

Amarsingh was really taken aback. He could not utter a single word. "What's this! We all have heard of your exploits. How can such a brave person go silent when he meets a princess...?" Suvarna teased him.

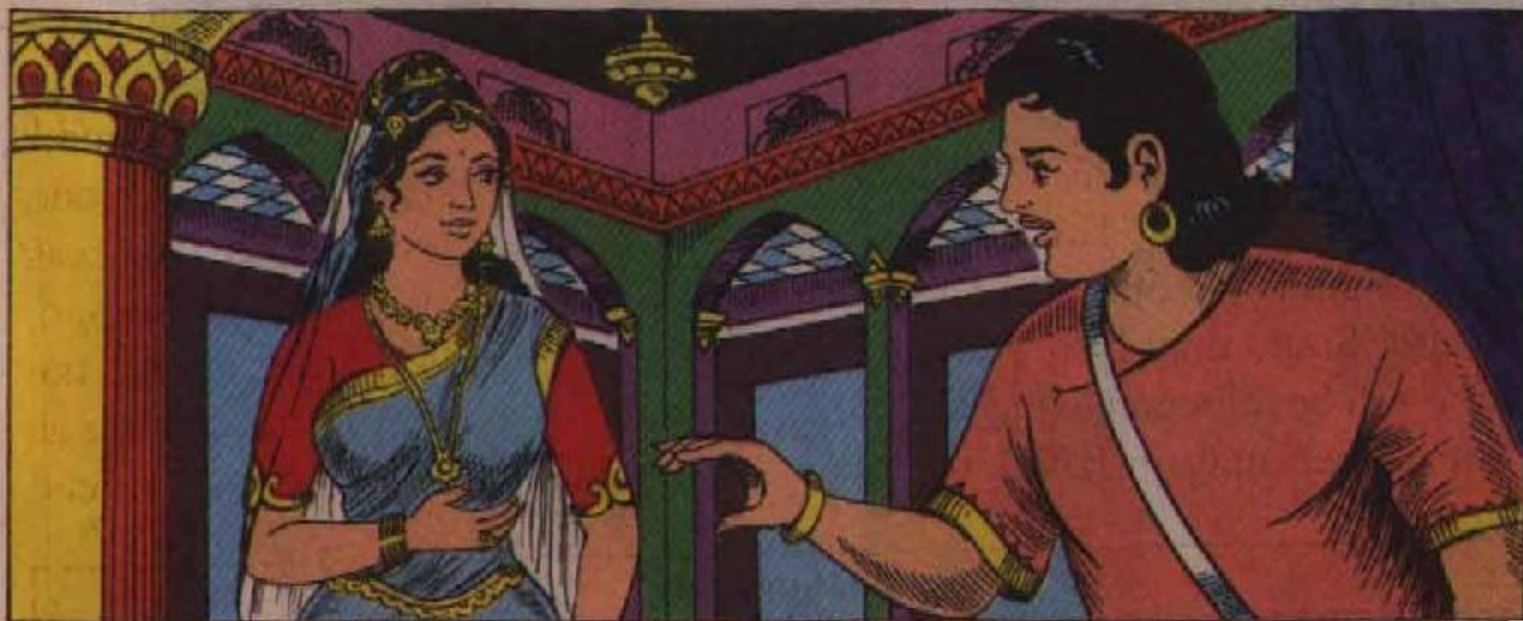
"True, I haven't seen the princess before," admitted Amarsingh. "But my grandmother had told me a lot about her. So, I had more or less an idea how she would look like. And how right I was! However, I must say that you surpass the princess of my imagination in beauty. Please go and request the king to arrange for our wedding. Let there be no delay!"

Suvarna did not make any reply.

She appeared to be shy and slowly went away from his presence. She reported all that had happened, first to Princess Dharini and then King Dharmapal. "What's all this?" the king was angry with Dharini. "How long can we keep this a secret? If he were to come to know of this, what'll Amarsingh do?"

"Please don't worry, father!" reassured Dharini once again. "Amarsingh only wanted to marry a princess. He didn't indicate which princess he wished to marry. You must recognise Suvarna as your daughter. If that happens, she becomes a princess. Let Amarsingh marry her, and I shall keep your promise to the King of Kuntapura. So, both promises will be kept! Don't you feel relieved, father?"

King Dharmapal nodded his head. He duly declared that Suvarna was also his daughter. Amarsingh after all did get a princess for his wife—Princess Suvarna!





# CLEVERER OF THE TWO



**L**axman was a moneylender. Sunder once took a loan from him, but never repaid the amount when the period was over. Laxman tried his level best, but he could not collect the money from Sunder.

The Zamindar of the place was in need of an accounts writer. He knew Laxman very well, and so he asked him to find a reliable person for the job. Two young men - Ganpati and Pasupati - came to know of the vacancy and approached Laxman for a recommendation.

"Your main job is to collect the revenue dues to the Zamindar," Laxman told them. "This you must do very promptly. People are of different nature. Some may have money, but they will be reluctant to pay the dues. Some others may not have any money

to spare at all. You've to tackle them diplomatically and discreetly."

The two listened to him intently and accepted the terms. Laxman then continued. "You know Sunder, don't you? He took a loan from me some time ago. The amount, with interest, has come to a thousand rupees. For almost a year, I've been trying to collect that amount. He's refusing to pay back the loan. Whoever succeeds in collecting the amount from him will be recommended to the Zamindar for the post of accountant."

"All right, we'll try our hand," agreed the young men and set out. Two days they toiled, but Sunder was adamant. They went back to Laxman. "Sir, I don't think I can collect the amount," wailed Ganpati. "It looks as though it is easier to draw out a thread





from a piece of stone!"

Laxman turned to Pasupati, who was smiling. "Sir, I've succeeded in collecting the amount from Sunder. Here's your thousand rupees!"

Laxman could not believe his eyes, though he was actually holding a thousand rupees in his hand. "Pasupati! You're really clever. I shall recommend your name to the Zamindar. You may join duty tomorrow."

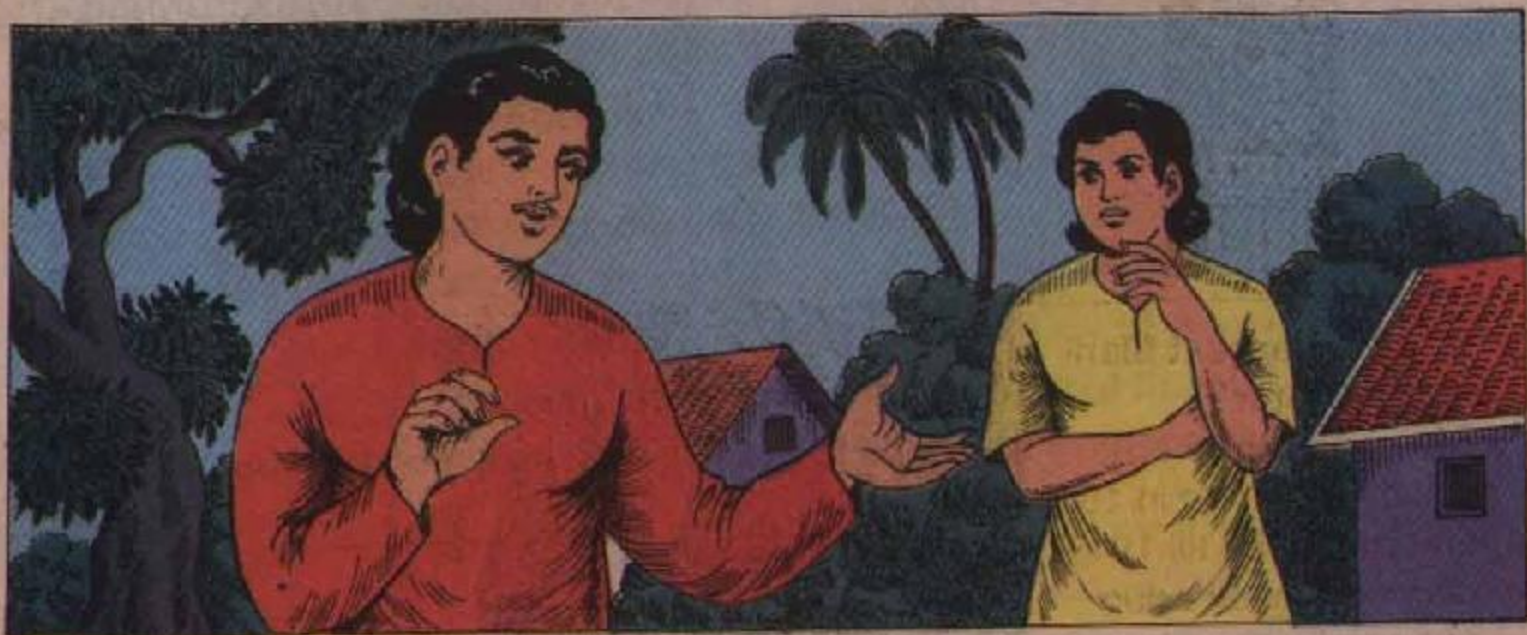
Ganpati and Pasupati paid their respects to Laxman and went out. On the way, Ganpati asked Pasupati how he managed to collect the money from the recalcitrant Sunder. "What magic did you employ to persuade that man to part with his money?"

"Oh! I played a trick!" explained Pasupati. "I promised him a loan of two thousand rupees. And I got a promissory note from him for that amount. I then gave him a thousand rupees, and paid the other thousand to Laxman, who got back his money."

"All right!" remarked Ganpati. "But how're you going to collect to your two thousand?"

Pasupati smiled. "Ah! I've taken care of that! I'm not such a simpleton. I've already found out how much Sunder owes the Zamindar and how much he's in arrears. Moreover, there's already a dispute between the Zamindar and Sunder about a property. The Zamindar had taken him to court and the case had dragged on. Sunder has been fined, but he is yet to pay the fine. He had offered one excuse after another, but the court did not accept any of them. He's a defaulter in the court also. When I become the Zamindar's accountant, I'll send him a notice and warn him of the consequences if he doesn't pay every pie. I can then force him to pay back my two thousand rupees!"

"You're really cleverer than I, Pasupati," Ganpati complimented him. "I'm sure you'll be a successful accountant. I've no doubt."







1. ...this **Snow-capped Volcanic Mountain?**  
It is held to be sacred by the people of that country. It is 3,775 m high and is said to be the world's most photographed mountain.

## Where in the World Would You Find...

### 3. ...Big Ben?

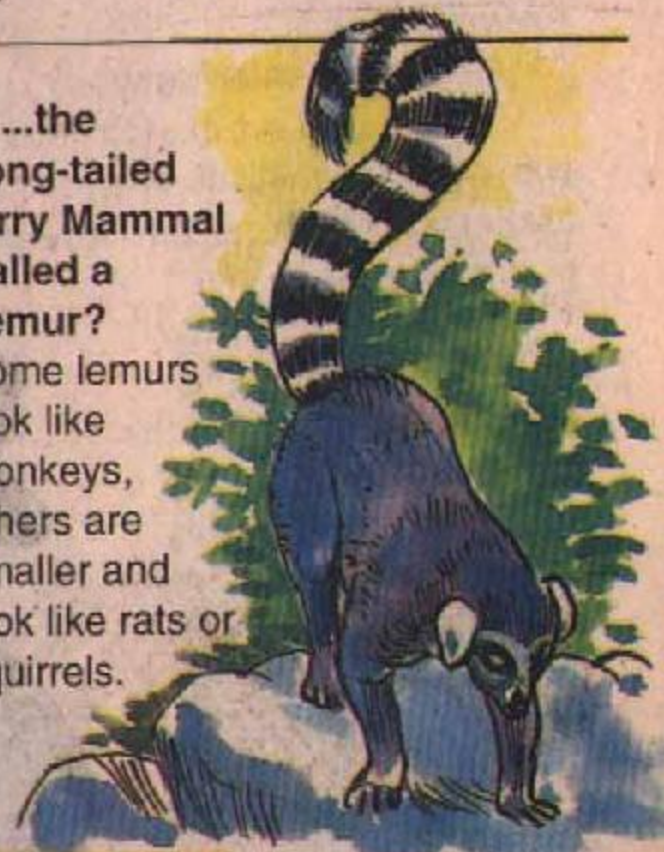
It is one of the most famous bells in the world. Some say it is named after the



man who supervised the hanging of the bell; others, that it is named after a famous boxer. It weighs over 13 tonnes.

### 4. ...the Long-tailed furry Mammal Called a Lemur?

Some lemurs look like monkeys, others are smaller and look like rats or squirrels.



### 5. ...the Largest Man-made Crater?

Diamonds were discovered here in 1871 and from then till 1915, diamond miners dug out nearly 23 million



tonnes of clay and rock and 2.7 tonnes of diamonds, to leave a gaping hole in the ground.



## STORY TRAP

Sometimes even great detectives known for their razor-sharp intellect make mistakes. Can you tell where Sherlock Holmes has gone wrong here?

### You Are Wrong, Mr. Holmes!

I HAD called on my friend Sherlock Holmes on the second morning after Christmas. He was lounging on the sofa in a purple dressing-gown, a pipe-rack within his reach, and a pile of crumpled morning papers at hand. Besides the couch was a wooden chair, and on the back hung a very dirty, worn, hard felt hat. A lens and forceps lying upon the seat suggested that Holmes had hung the hat over the angle of the chair to examine it.

"Perhaps I interrupt you?" I said.

"Not at all. I am glad to have a friend with whom I can discuss my results. The matter is a trivial one, but there are some points of interest in it."

"You know Peterson, the commissioner?"

"Yes."

"It is to him that this belongs."

"It is his hat?"

"No, he found it. Its owner is unknown..."

"Then what clue could you have about who he was?"

"Only as much as we can deduce."

"From his hat?"

"Precisely."

"But what can you gather from this old bat-

tered felt?

He picked it up and gazed at it. "It is obvious that the man was very clever."

"You are certainly joking, Holmes," I said. "I must be very stupid, but I am quite unable to follow you. For example, how did you guess that the man was clever?"

In reply, Holmes put the hat on his head. It came right over the forehead and settled on the bridge of his nose.

"A man with so large a brain must have something in it," he said.

(Excerpt from Conan Doyle's 'THE BLUE CARBUNCLE')





# PICTURE TRAP

A Red Indian is watching the first Europeans come ashore. There's a major mistake in this picture. What is it?

## When The Foreigners Came Ashore



© Amrita Bharati, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1996

## PICTURE QUIZ

1. This is a picture of  
(i) A parrot fish (ii) A whistler (iii) An archerfish



2. This person is reading a book while floating in a lake which may be the saltiest in the world. The lake is called (a) The Caspian Sea (b) The Dead Sea (c) Lake Torrens



3. This map represents the country of  
(a) Spain (b) France (c) Portugal



# Learn to draw



## Answers to **GOLDEN HOUR NO. 9**

### Where in the world...

- A. Koala bears are only found in Australia.
- B. The statue of the Little Mermaid stands at the entrance to Copenhagen harbour.
- C. Madame Tussaud's wax museum is in London.
- D. You would have to go to San Francisco in the United States to cross the Golden Gate bridge.

### Brainteasers

- 1. As the men got equal shares it meant each loaf was portioned out into 3 parts which made a total of 24 parts. Each man ate 8 parts so the man who had 5 loaves or 15 parts gave  $(15-8)$  parts to the traveller and the Arab who had 3 loaves or 9 parts gave  $(9-8)$ . So the Arab who had parted with 7 parts should get 7 pieces of silver and the one who had parted with 1, just one.
- 2. It was not raining!
- 3. They do what everybody else does — throw them away!
- 4. 5 stops.
- 5. Knot the free end of the white handkerchief to the free end of the red handkerchief!
- 6. A whip! A whip cracks because its tip moves faster than the speed of sound.
- 7. It was filled with some other liquid, not water.
- 8. As the water was spilt on the 5th day when 8 days were left and no one was affected by it, it means the water spilt amounted to 8 litres, the dead man's share.
- 9. Balwant Sharma has raised his left arm, not the one he claims is injured.



# NEWS FLASH

## Surprise from skies

Children of Taipei, the capital of Taiwan (also called Formosa) heard the whirr of a helicopter which brought them out of their houses. When it flew low, they saw that it was a bright red in colour and was



in the shape of a lollipop—something unusual for a helicopter. Moreover, it had no pilot! Evidently it was flying with the help of radio waves made from a remote control. The most exciting surprise came at the last, before it flew off—it showered real lollipops from above!

## Longest banner

The world observed AIDS day on December 1. As no cure for this fatal disease has till now been discovered, the effort is directed towards its prevention. People are being educated—through TV, radio, and newspapers, besides conferences and seminars—how to avoid contracting the disease, which is slowly assuming alarming proportions, if we have to believe the figures given to us about the rising number of people getting

afflicted by AIDS. In Mumbai (Bombay), on the eve of AIDS day, nearly 10,000 people joined a rally, holding a banner which had slogans about AIDS Awareness. The banner was 4.5 km long—probably the longest banner ever prepared in the world. Certainly, the message it carried must have reached thousands of people who went past the banner that day.

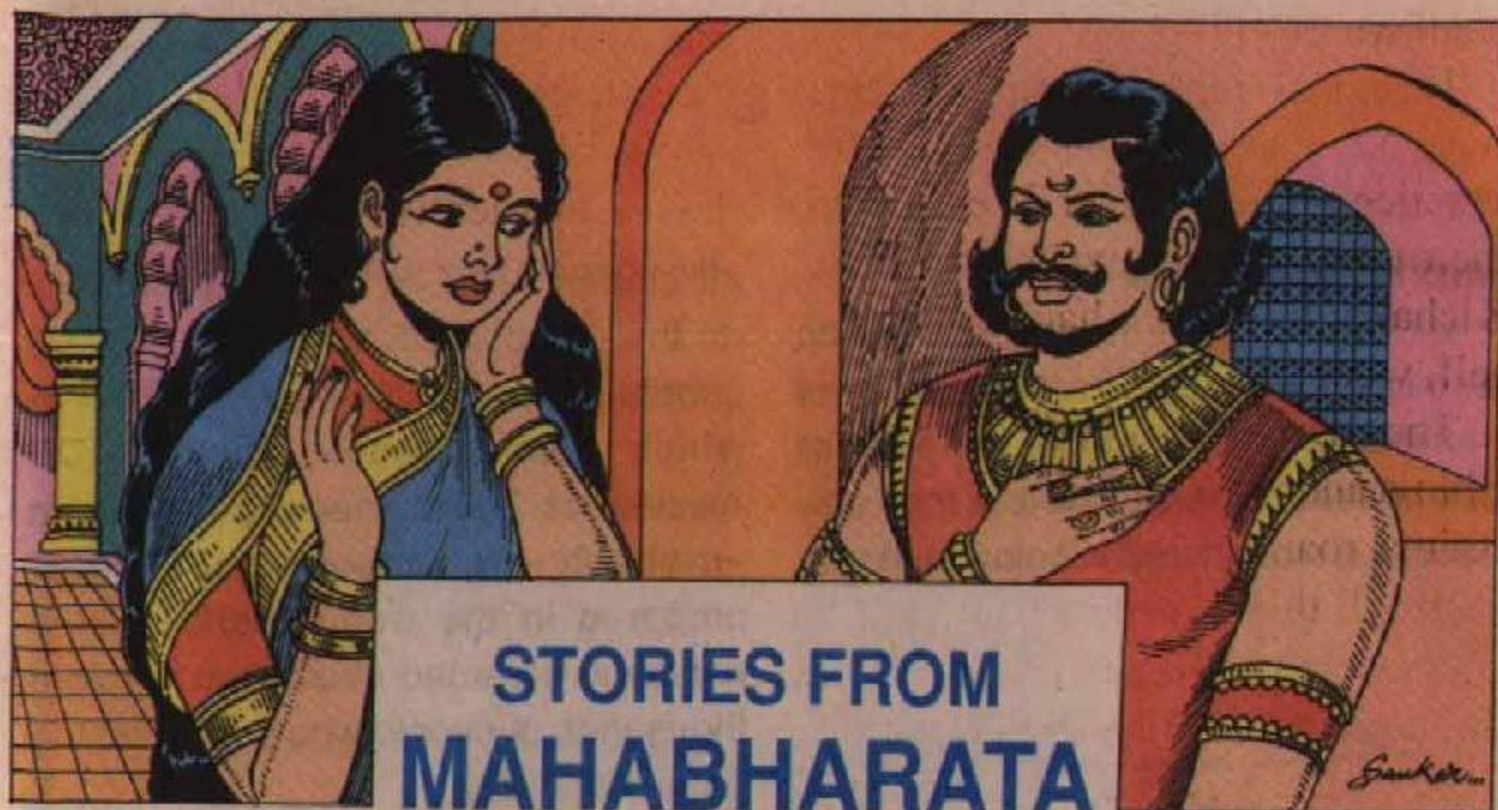
## Salaried Santa Claus

A lecture room in Berlin University campus the other day held a unique class. Those who attended the class



were all regular students, but they had come wearing the familiar red robe of Santa Claus, looking old in their flowing white beards. They took lessons in how to act as Santa Claus and St. Nicholas—the name popular in some European countries, when they would be engaged by companies and institutions to play that most affable character. That was one way these young men earned some pocket-money.





## STORIES FROM MAHABHARATA

### The story so far...

Much to the chagrin of the Kaurava princes, headed by Duryodhana, the Pandava princes complete their twelve years of exile in the forests. Now they are required to remain in hiding for one year, and for this, they decide to find jobs at the court of Virata, King of Matsya.

Yudhishtira presents himself as a Brahmin skilled in dice and becomes a courtier of the king. Bhima enters the king's service as a cook. Arjuna teaches the women of the royal household music and dancing. Nakula becomes a keeper of the king's horses, and Sahadeva takes charge of the cattle. Draupadi disguises herself as a maid, and serves the queen.

All goes well until Kichaka, brother of the queen and commander-in-chief of the army, decides he must marry Draupadi. He pesters Draupadi to agree to his proposal. Draupadi goes to the king for protection, but in vain. Bhima decides to kill the tyrant.

**N**ext morning Kichaka boasted before Draupadi: "Remember what happened yesterday? Did you see how powerful I am? Could anyone come to your rescue? None can question me. Now you know who is the true king of this land! You must do as I say. Marry me, and you will live like a queen."

Draupadi looked at him and in a low voice, said, "Sir, if you want to

marry me, then you must respect some of my wishes. We should meet in secret. Neither the king nor the queen should suspect us, and for my part, I shall not tell my divine protectors anything, because if they come to know of our relationship, they will surely kill you."

Kichaka could hardly believe his ears. This proud woman was to be his at last! Eagerly he said, "Good. Where

### 27. THE ENCOUNTER IN THE DANCE HALL



shall we meet?"

Draupadi replied, "In the dance hall. No one comes there after the practice session is over. We can meet there tonight. I shall expect you there." Kichaka, humming happily to himself, went away.

Then Draupadi ran to the waiting Bhima and informed him of the tryst. Bhima roared mightily and said, "I shall kill this monster. His death, of course, would reduce the power of this land, but it will also be a warning to all would-be wrong-doers. No one would ever trouble you with his unwelcome attentions."

As the evening shadows lengthened, Kichaka and Bhima waited eagerly for the night, each for a different reason. At midnight, when everyone was fast asleep, Kichaka arose and, putting on all his finery, crept

like a thief into the dance bower. In the darkness of the hall, he could just see a motionless figure in the bed. Tiptoeing silently he reached one side of the bed and softly rubbed a stretched arm. "Ah! I shall give you whatever you desire. A thousand maidens will attend to your needs," he whispered.

At these words, the figure on the bed sat up and an arm like an iron chain fell on Kichaka's shoulders.

"So, you will give me whatever I desire! I desire nothing more than your life," retorted Bhima with a laugh and seized Kichaka by his flowing locks.

Kichaka realized that he had been trapped. An immensely strong man was pinning him down. What a fool he had been to come! Bhima caught him by the waist, lifted him and threw him forcefully on the ground. Kichaka





got up slowly and rushed upon Bhima. But the legendary Pandava warrior gave him no chance. In a trice, he kicked Kichaka hard in the stomach, and followed it up with a vicious chop on his unguarded neck. Then raining blows on Kichaka, he snapped his neck and the latter crumpled on the ground like a lifeless doll, his head rolling on one side. Then Bhima called Draupadi and said, "There, there lies the man who insulted you! Now, be happy. Let everyone know that those who misbehave with you shall share a similar fate."

Draupadi, feeling very happy, rushed out of the dance hall and told the guards to go and see for themselves what had happened. The news of Kichaka's horrible death spread all over the palace and his kinsmen gathered to lament over his mangled body.

When they saw Draupadi, their anger knew no bounds.

"This woman is the cause of our dear Kichaka's death. Let us burn her alive on the funeral pyre of our hero," they shouted. Then they went to the king and sought his assent for their proposed deed. The king agreed and Kichaka's brothers dragged Draupadi to the cremation grounds. The hapless woman cried out to the Pandavas to save her from this awful fate. Her piercing cry reached Bhima and, quickly disguising himself, he rushed to the cremation grounds. Uprooting a large tree, he charged the hundred and five strong kinsmen of Kichaka. Facing this unexpected savage onslaught, they began to run helter-skelter, shouting all the while that Draupadi's divine protector was killing them! Shaking with fear they be-





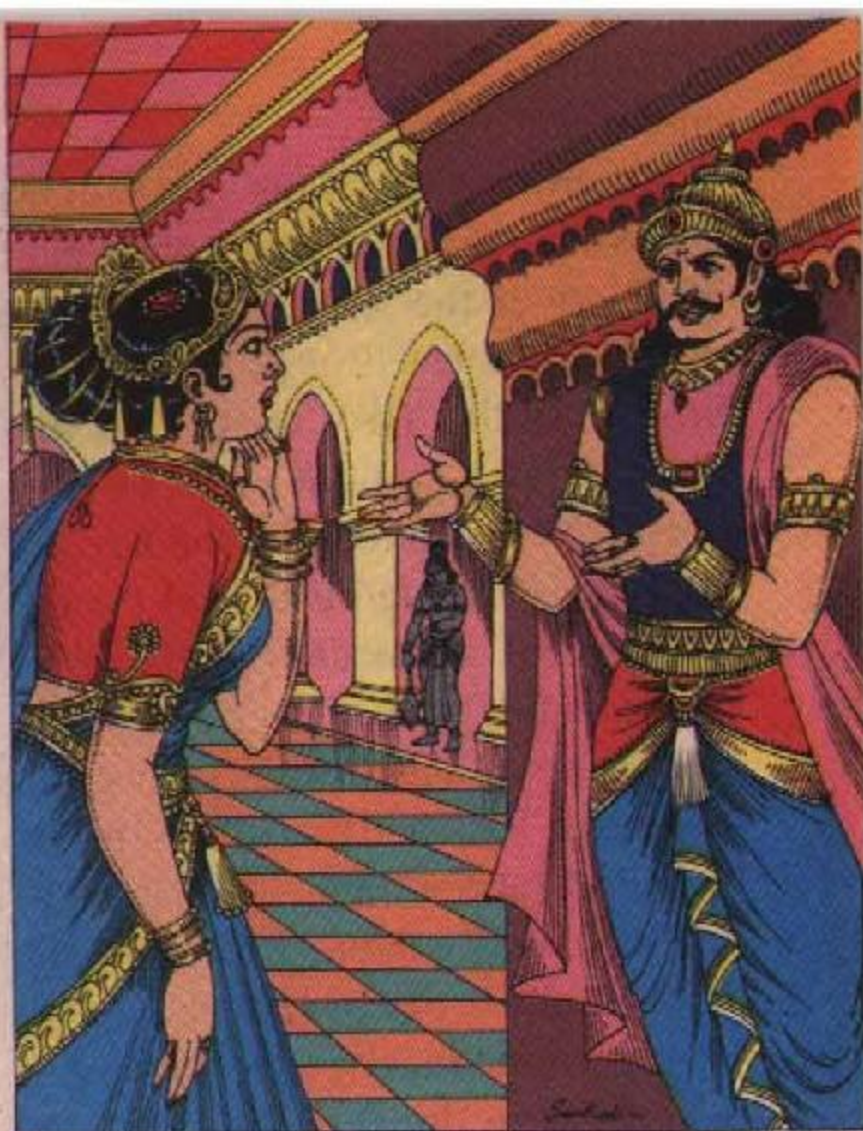
gan to run towards the palace gates. But Bhima pursued them and made short work of them. Then he comforted Draupadi and went back to the royal kitchen, as if nothing had happened.

Eyewitnesses to the massacre of the hundred reported to the king all the gruesome details. "O King," they said, "this Draupadi is not only possessed of a fatal charm, she has also powerful protectors who destroy everything that comes on their path. We tremble lest they destroy the city too!"

The king grew uneasy at these words and after arranging for the disposal of the dead, sought out his queen. He said to Sudeshna, "O Queen, I am afraid of what might happen to us if your maid's divine protectors turn their wrath on us. Therefore, go and request her to leave our palace. But mark you, behave respectfully, lest she be annoyed again!"

The ladies of the palace now looked at Draupadi with awe and respect in their eyes. Her fame spread all over the land and many avoided her out of fear.

Even Bhima, the royal chef, to keep up appearances, bowed low before her and asked in a solemn voice whether it was true that an aerial sprite had saved her from dishonour. Draupadi replied that it was indeed true. Then she walked back to her boudoir. There Arjuna, now in the guise of a danseuse, spoke to her: "Is



it true that a powerful protector saved you from dishonour?"

Then Arjuna mollified her by saying that he was always thinking of her sorrows and was ever ready to come to her rescue.

Queen Sudeshna sent for her maid and repeated what the king had said. She must leave the land at once. Then Draupadi implored her to wait for another thirteen days. After that her five protectors would escort her out of the land.

Kichaka's gory death at the hands of a mysterious being became the talk of the kingdom. The King of Matsya became despondent at the thought that he was no longer powerful and therefore could fall an easy prey to his





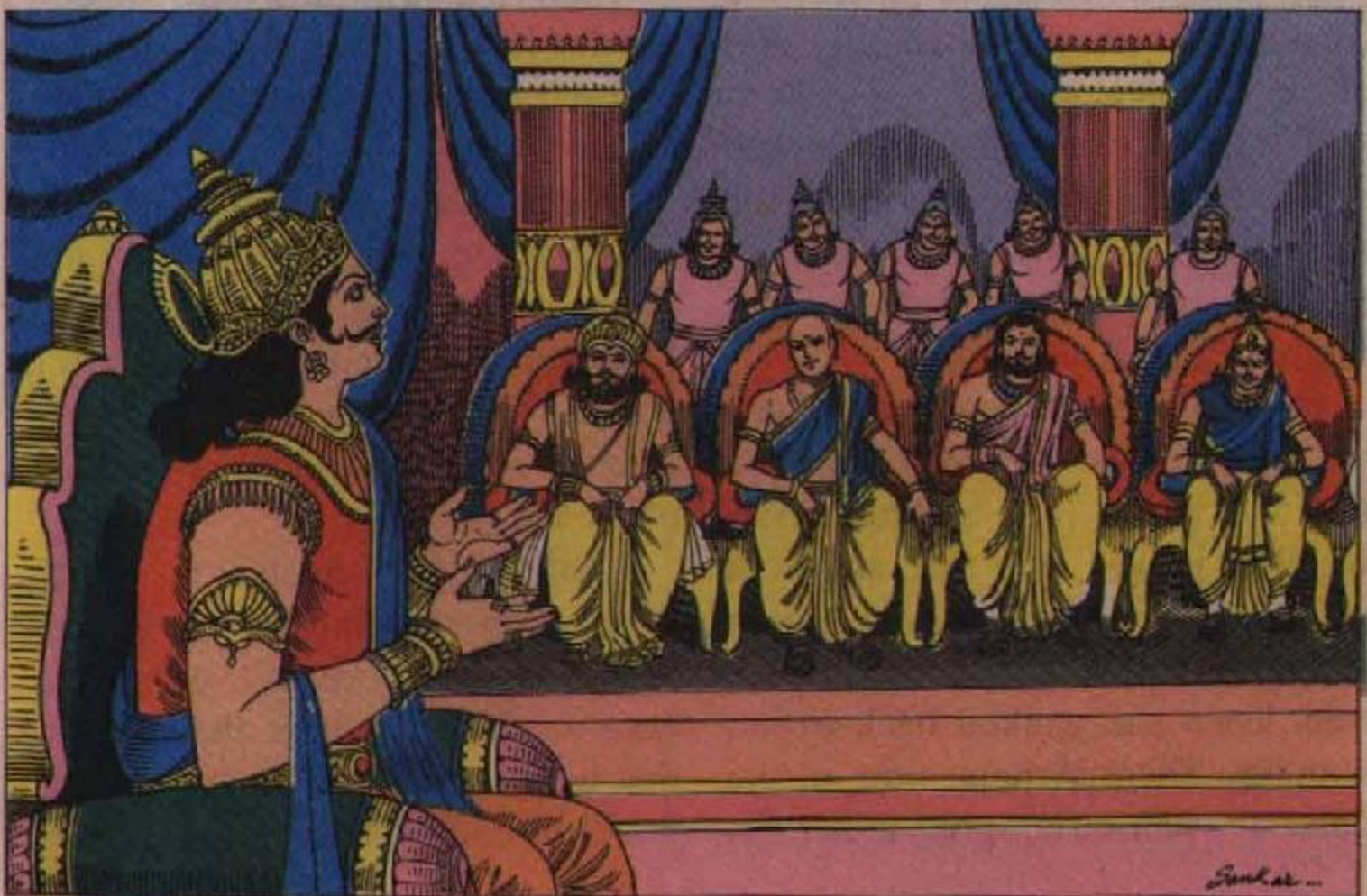
enemies.

At the same time, elsewhere Duryodhana's spies were trying hard to discover the whereabouts of the exiled Pandavas. But all their efforts proved futile. They concluded that the Pandavas were dead. Then they passed on to Duryodhana the news of Kichaka's bizarre death and the destruction of the hundred and five men at the hands of a mysterious being. Soon Duryodhana called an assembly of his kinsmen and courtiers. He declared before them, "The exile of the Pandavas will end in a few days. But we must discover their whereabouts immediately; otherwise they will claim my throne. If they are found within this period, then we can send them again to their exile in the

forest."

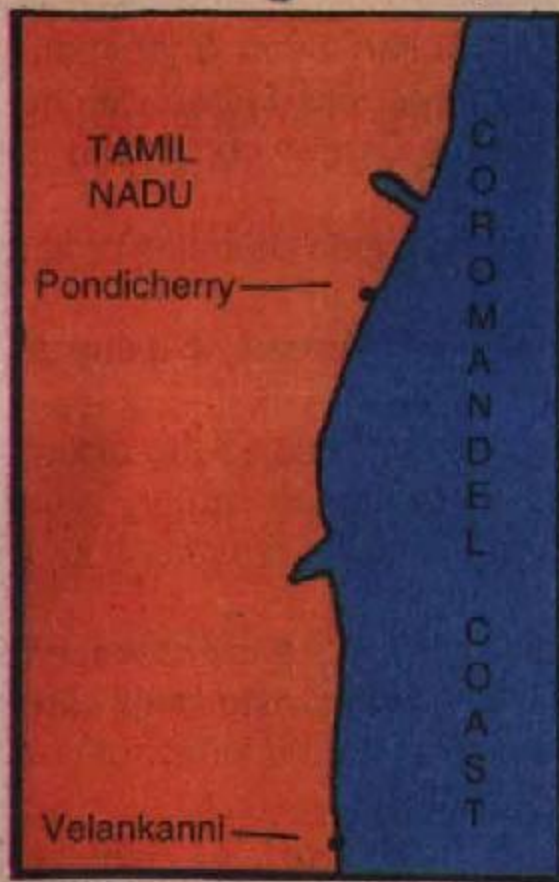
Karna and Duhsasana declared that spies should be sent to the four corners of the earth to detect the presence of the Pandavas. Drona opined that the Pandavas were dead. Bhishma said wisely, "Wherever the Pandavas are, there the land will be prosperous and happy. The people will be good, and rain will fall during the proper season. Find out which is the land like that and you would have found the Pandavas."

Kripacharya, however, hinted at an ominous future. He said, "If the Pandavas return from their exile on schedule, then Duryodhana must give back the kingdom to them. If he refuses to do so, war will follow. Therefore, we must prepare for war."





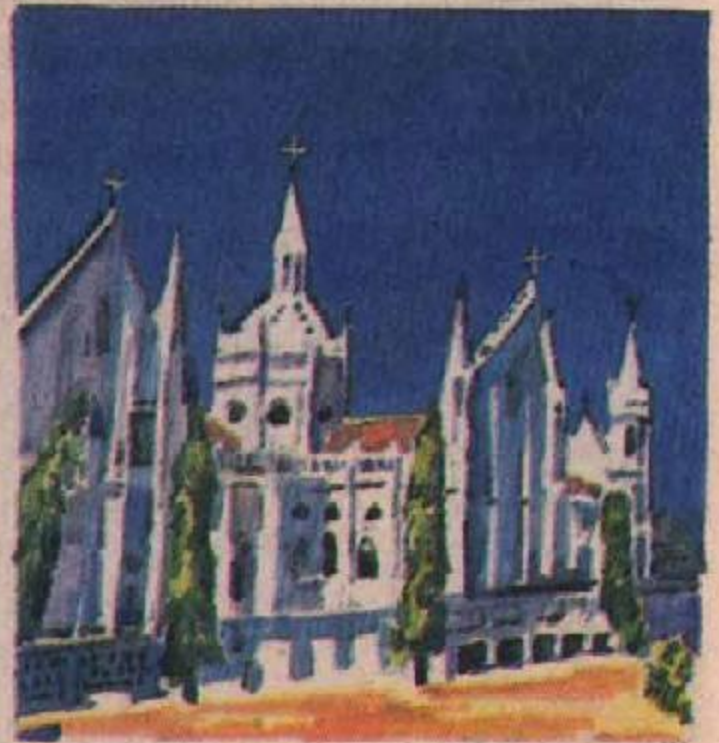
## Along The Coromandel Coast



Leaving the Gulf of Mannar behind, we arrive at the Coromandel coast, immortalised in the poem *The Coromandel Fishers* by Sarojini Naidu, the 'Night-ingle' of India. The Coromandel coast is well-known for its religious shrines.

One of the most visited pilgrim

centres on the Coromandel coast is the **Church of Our Lady of Health** at **Velankanni**. Devotees throng the church and those cured of their ailments donate gold and silver replicas of the particular part of the body that was healed. The church has a museum where these replicas are displayed. A passage, whose walls have pictures depicting stories from the Bible, leads to the original church situated near the seashore.



**The Church of Our Lady of Health, Velankanni**

**Nagapattinam**, a minor port, lies a few kilometres to the north of Velankanni. It was a famous port in ancient times and served as a Pallava naval base in the 5th century A.D. Hardly 24 kilometres inland is Tiruvarur, the birth-place of Tyagaraja who, along with Muthuswami Dikshitar and Shyama Shastri, comprise the Trinity of Carnatic Music.

Four kilometres to the north of Nagapattinam is



**The famous Trinity of Carnatic Music**



**Nagore**, well-known for the dargah of Hazrat Meeras Sultan Syed Shahabul Hameed or Hazrat Mian. People of all faiths visit the 500-year-old dargah with its golden dome, flanked by five minarets. The tank inside the dargah compound is believed to have curative properties.

Nagore is also known for its palmleaf handicrafts which include shopping bags, dinner cases and ornamental folding fans.

Moving further north we reach **Karaikal**, an ancient pilgrim centre. It is one of the four districts of the Union Territory of Pondicherry.

The saint-singer Karaikal Ammiyar, whose songs are regarded as the oldest among the available Saivite devotional songs, lived here in the 6th century A.D. Three of her famous works are *Arputat-Tiruvantati*, *Irattai-Manimalai* and *Mutta-Tiruppatikankal*.

Karaikal Ammiyar's husband left her when he came to know that she possessed mystical powers. Hurt by his behaviour she became a wandering minstrel and went from temple to temple singing devotional songs. She is remembered today for her beautiful songs. There is a temple dedicated to her at Karaikal.



Our next port of call is **Tarangambadi** or **Tranquebar**, once a Danish settlement. It was Denmark's only Asian holding from 1620 till 1840. The main city remains much the same way as when the Danes had built it. Danesborg castle and fort, the 200-year-old gate through which the citizens have to pass on their way out and into the town, Rehling's Gard, the house in which the last Danish Governor, Johnnaes Rehling, lived between 1823 and 1841 and a couple of churches, stand as testimony to the city's Danish past.

### The Danesborg Castle

**Poompuhar**. It was once a prosperous port city of the Chola empire and carried on an extensive trade with countries like Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indo-China and China proper.

According to a legend, the festival of Indrapuja was held here every year in summer. One year, for some reason, the festival could not be held. This made Manimekalai, the sea-goddess, so angry that she caused a fierce typhoon and the sea swallowed up the city and the port.

In 1962, excavations carried out at Kilaiyur in the vicinity of Poompuhar, proved





**The Art Gallery, Poompuhar**

dancer. Just then, Siva performed a yogic feat. He stood on one leg and lifted the other high above his shoulder and looked at Parvati challengingly. Inhibited by modesty from imitating such a posture, Parvati admitted defeat.

The temple's rectangular sanctum has the idol of Siva in this posture. The idol is made from an alloy of five metals and the sanctum is covered with coppertiles and gold.

Our next halt is at **Pondicherry**, the capital of the Union Territory of Pondicherry-- a city with a rich, colourful past. The Romans, the Portuguese, the French, the Dutch and the British had all set up trading-posts and settlements here from the 1st century A.D. to the present century. From 1814 to 1954 Pondicherry remained in

that the original city had indeed been submerged by the sea. Poompuhar was also a centre of Buddhism. In fact the Tamil classic, *Manimekalai*, was composed for the propagation of Buddhism.

From Poompuhar, our journey takes us to **Chidambaram**, known as the City of the Cosmic Dancer. The celebrated Natraja temple stands at the city's centre. It is dedicated to Lord Siva, the Cosmic Dancer.

Legend has it that the famous dance competition between Siva and Parvati, to see who could perform better, was held here. Both were perfectly matched. Anything Siva did, Parvati could do equally well and vice-versa. The heavenly creatures who had assembled there found it impossible to decide who was the better



**Siva, the Cosmic Dancer**



French hands .

During the country's struggle for freedom, Pondicherry was a haven for freedom fighters. It was here that poet Subramanya Bharati composed patriotic songs and carried on national propaganda. He ushered in a new era in Tamil literature with songs like *L S Kannan Pattu*, *Kuyil Pattu* and *Panchali Sappham*. His fiery songs have become immortal and are sung with pride by the people of Tamil Nadu. His house at 20, Eswaran Dharmarajakoil Street has been declared a national monument.

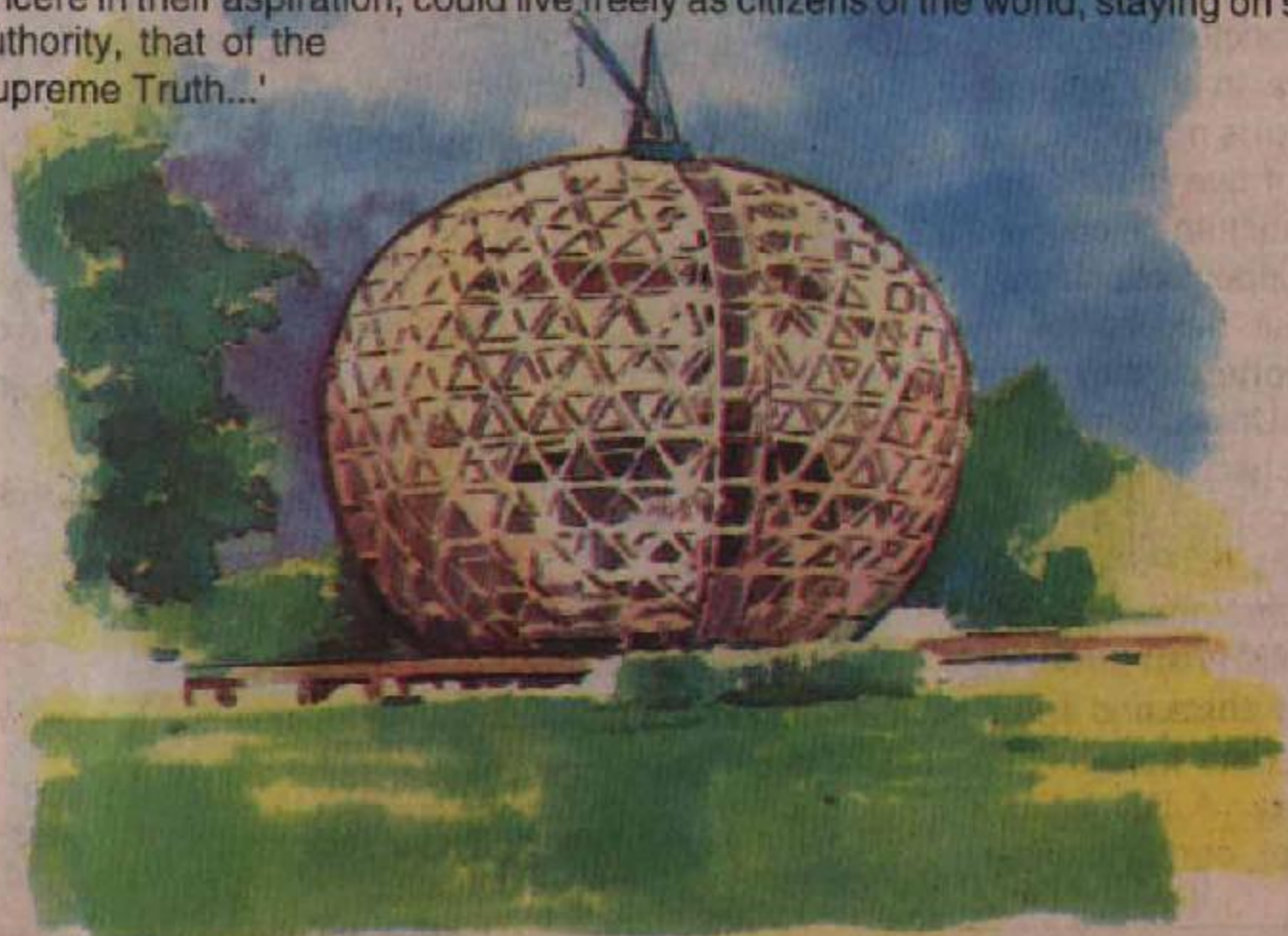
Another freedom fighter who took refuge in this French enclave was Sri Aurobindo Ghose. He came to Pondicherry in 1920 and began to lead a spiritual life, writing several philosophical books of which *Life Divine*, *Savitri* and *The Interpretations of the Gita, Upanishads and the Vedas* are considered to be his best works.

To put his ideals of peaceful community living into practice, Aurobindo started an ashram along with the Holy Mother (Mirra Alfassa, a French disciple who helped, supported and guided him from 1920 until his death in 1950 and continued as his spiritual successor until her death in 1973).

**Auroville** or the **City of Dawn**, 8 km away from Pondicherry, was set up in 1968 as a tribute to Aurobindo, who believed 'there should be somewhere on Earth a place that no nation can claim as sole property, a place where all human beings of goodwill, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world, staying on single authority, that of the Supreme Truth...'



Sri Aurobindo



The Matri Mandir, Auroville



## "EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE"



In old old days, on the mountain-top there nestled a wee little hamlet. In it stood a wee little house and in it lived a merry little couple. They were sweetly known as Master and Madam Chin Tong. They were poor, hard-working farmers and owned a small stretch of land. They survived on what their precious plot gave them and it was just enough for both.

One day as Master Chin Tong was digging, his spade struck something hard and solid. Soon he unearthed a big round empty pot. He carried it to his wife thinking that it would be of some use to her.

"O dear, what have you brought?" she asked rather surprised, helping

him to lower his burden.

"I found this vessel buried in our land. I'm sure it will be of some use to us," replied Chin Tong.

"Let me see," said Madam Chin Tong and stooped to inspect it. As she did so, running her fingers inside the pot, her ring slipped off and fell into it. She threw her hand into it again in search of the ring.

Lo and behold, her hand met with not one but two rings, and both exactly alike. The couple stared at them in disbelief.

"Let's now drop into it our pouch of ten gold coins, our only savings, and see what happens to it," suggested the farmer.





But what do you think the pot gave them back? Two similar pouches with the same number of gold coins in each of them. Then they put the twenty gold pieces in one bag and dropped it into the vessel. Instantly they got back two bags, each containing twenty gold coins. In this way the poor couple gathered a large number of gold coins. For a long time they thus amused themselves by dropping all sorts of things into the pot and then drawing out two of every item.

At sundown the following day, when Master Chin Tong returned from work, a strange sight met his eyes. He found Madam singing with her head right inside the pot which was echoing and re-echoing back her voice

loud and clear.

"It's amazing! This magical vessel also duplicates human speech!" he exclaimed throwing up his hands.

"Yes, dear husband! Isn't it fantastic!" replied his wife drawing her head out and looking back with great excitement. In the process she lost her balance and tumbled right into the great vessel.

Nervous little Chin Tong at once made a dash to his wife's rescue. With much difficulty he did pull her out. But alas, the moment he had done so he found another pair of legs sticking out of the pot. He managed to pull them too and set their owner safely down. Lo and behold, whom did he see standing before him? None other than Madam Chin Tong, his wife! Bewildered he looked to his right and there again stood his wife, Madam Chin Tong, exactly alike, to the tiniest mole on the tip of her nose.

"How can we afford to have another Madam Chin Tong in the house?" objected the farmer's wife. "Just throw her back into the pot!"

"What? You suggest that I pull out two more wives! Then what will I do with three of them?" sighed Master Chin Tong stepping back and accidentally tripping over and falling straight into the pot.

So, both the twin-like ladies immediately set about in rescuing Master Chin Tong. No sooner had they managed to do so than another Mas-



ter Chin Tong leaped out of the magical pot. Now they all faced an unusual dilemma. How can so many Chin Tongs live under one tiny roof?

Then Madam Chin Tong said in a pondering manner, "Isn't it true, dear husband, that the pot had given us enough in advance to meet such a situation? Indeed, it is a joy to realise that there really exist a new Master Chin Tong of you and a new Madam Chin Tong of me!"

Master Chin Tong gave a serious thought to his wife's sudden revelation. Then he happily proposed the following solution. "In that case dear wife, let's build a new house for the new Chin Tongs and then construct a new one for ourselves too next to theirs!"

So it was, with the money they had gathered from the pot, two similar little houses were built for the two pairs of Chin Tongs. From then on, the farmer and his wife, whatever they got for themselves, they always

produced another just like it by the help of the pot and gave it to their new selves.

So the Chin Tongs lived happily ever after. They never knew any want, for the magical pot was always there to help them out. But the simple folks of the village are still unable to solve the mystery behind the farmers' sudden windfall and the mystery of their duplication. When they behold the four Chin Tongs together taking a stroll, they just goggle their eyes and say, "Everything is possible!" But the rational ones among them reason out, "Perhaps our familiar Ching Tong had a twin brother and his wife had a twin sister and the second pair too were a married couple, but lived far away and have at last come to live with the first."

When some of the villagers ask one of the Chin Tongs, he would smile and say, "Everything is possible!"

— Anup Kishore Das





## One of five sisters

According to one legend, *banana* or plantain, mango, plum, fig, and tamarind were sisters. They remained unmarried for a long time and God was perturbed. When he queried, four of them agreed to get married. Banana did not wish to marry but at the same time wanted children. God then changed them into trees; their hair became branches, and their children were the fruits. God ordained that whoever climbed the trees could be considered their husband. Except banana. No one climbs a banana tree, yet it brings forth fruits.

In Sanskrit, banana is *Mocha*; in Hindi it is *Kela*; in English it is also called *Adam's Apple*. The name *Kadali* is common in quite a few Indian languages, though in Tamil and Malayalam, the name is *Vazhai*. It is said, the Buddhists had a special reverence for banana and made a drink called *Mochapana*, mentioned in Buddhist literature. In our epics, *Kadalivana* or the banana garden is the home of Hanuman.

The ripe fruits can be seen with their skin either green, yellow, or red. And they are of varying sizes, too. There are more than 5,000 varieties, of which ten or eleven are popular

like Champa, Chiniya, Dakee, Hara, Moothiya, Malbhog, and Singapuri.

The leaves are broad as well as long, divided lengthwise into two parts. Leaves, as long as five or six feet, are very common. In South India, the leaves, cut to required sizes, are used for serving food. On festive occasions like marriage, it is considered auspicious to decorate gates and door entrances with banana trees, leaves, fruits and all.

After a plant bears fruit, the tree is cut. The offshoots around now grow into trees.





## BHARADWAJA

People desire to live long simply because of a blind fondness for life. But Sage Bharadwaja, the son of Sage Ātri, had only one reason for wishing to live long. He wished to study the Vedas properly.

As a disciple of the great Valmiki, our first poet and the author of the first epic, the *Ramayana*, Bharadwaja had learnt much. Even then he felt that he had understood very little of the Vedas.

With the blessings of Indra, the king of gods, he lived very, very long, devoting all his time to the study of the Vedas and to meditate on their hymns. At last came a time when he must die. He meditated on Indra and prayed to him to extend his life further. Indra appeared before him and led him along for a walk.

The two walked through a meadow. At the end of it stood three mountains. Indra asked the sage to open his palms. He then hauled up three handfuls of sand and placed them on the palms of the sage.

"How do these three handfuls of sand compare with the three mountains?" asked Indra.

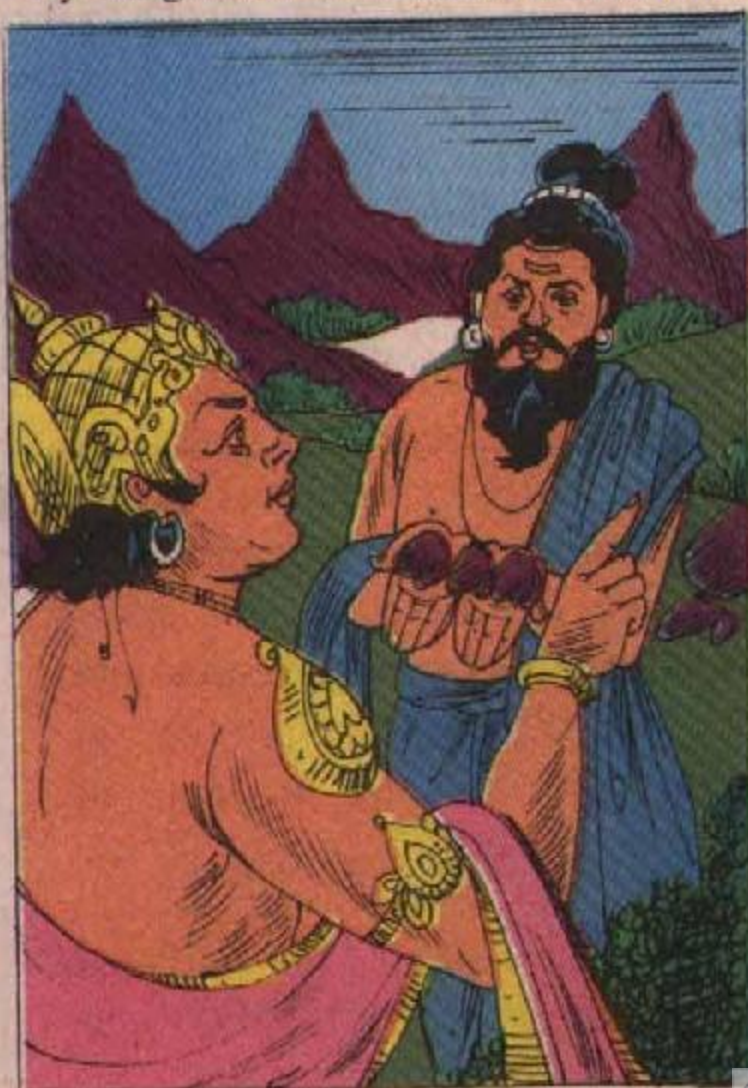
"The quantity of the sand in each heap is so insignificant that they hardly mean anything when compared to the mountains," answered Bharadwaja.

"Right. What you have known about the Vedas, when compared with the entire Vedas, is as much as this quantity of

sand when compared to the mountains!" said Indra, under the impression that the sage would be disheartened and his zeal for knowing the Vedas would vanish, or he would revolt and say that he had learnt the Vedas much more than what Indra had thought!

But Bharadwaja was a great optimist and a humble seeker. Far from being discouraged, his interest grew more intense. Why should he give up trying to conquer the mountains? he wondered.

The god Indra appreciated Bharadwaja's courage as well as humility. He granted him another lease of life.





# DO YOU KNOW?

1. The name Agra—where the Taj Mahal is situated—has originated from the word *Agrabana*. What does it mean?
2. The tiger was declared India's national animal in 1972. Which was the country's national animal till then?
3. In Indonesia, the present President Sukarno's daughter has become the main contender for power. What is her name?
4. Prime Minister Deve Gowda hails from Karnataka. Which is his home district?
5. The Second World War came to an end with the surrender of Japan after atom bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The latter was *not* the original target, but another city. Which?
6. A common household pest, it is believed, can survive even a nuclear attack. Which is that pest?
7. Where in Africa will you go to see the Owen waterfalls?
8. Though modern Olympic Games began in 1896, the ritual of taking the Olympic oath was introduced only later. When?
9. In 1960, STD facility was introduced in India for the first time. Which two cities were then connected?
10. Italo Marcioni is famous for his invention—a favourite of many children. What is it?
11. A game which originated in the U.S.A. in 1815 later became popular in many countries of Asia. Which is that game?
12. What is the old name of the Commonwealth Games?
13. Which Indian cricketer scored the first Test century?
14. One Indian has been conferred with all four titles—Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, and Bharat Ratna. Name him.
15. In which year was the Planning Commission first constituted? Who was the first Deputy-Chairman?

## ANSWERS

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Garden of Paradise   | 8. At the Antwerp Olympics in 1920 |
| 2. The lion   | 7. Uganda                          |
| 3. Megawati Sukarnoputri  | 6. Cockroach                       |
| 4. Hassan   | 5. Kokura, near Hiroshima          |
| 5. The Second World War came to an end with the surrender of Japan after atom bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The latter was <i>not</i> the original target, but another city. Which? | 4. Satyajit Ray                    |
| 6. A common household pest, it is believed, can survive even a nuclear attack. Which is that pest?  | 3. Lala Amarnath                   |
| 7. Where in Africa will you go to see the Owen waterfalls?  | 2. The British Empire Games        |
| 8. Though modern Olympic Games began in 1896, the ritual of taking the Olympic oath was introduced only later. When?  | 1. Volleyball                      |
| 9. In 1960, STD facility was introduced in India for the first time. Which two cities were then connected?  | 10. Ice-cream cone                 |
| 10. Italo Marcioni is famous for his invention—a favourite of many children. What is it?  | 9. Lucknow and Kanpur              |
| 11. A game which originated in the U.S.A. in 1815 later became popular in many countries of Asia. Which is that game?   | 15. In 1950—Professor Mahalanobis  |
| 12. What is the old name of the Commonwealth Games?   |                                    |
| 13. Which Indian cricketer scored the first Test century?   |                                    |
| 14. One Indian has been conferred with all four titles—Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, and Bharat Ratna. Name him.  |                                    |
| 15. In which year was the Planning Commission first constituted? Who was the first Deputy-Chairman?   |                                    |





New Tales of King Vikram and the Vampire

## EVERYBODY'S WELFARE

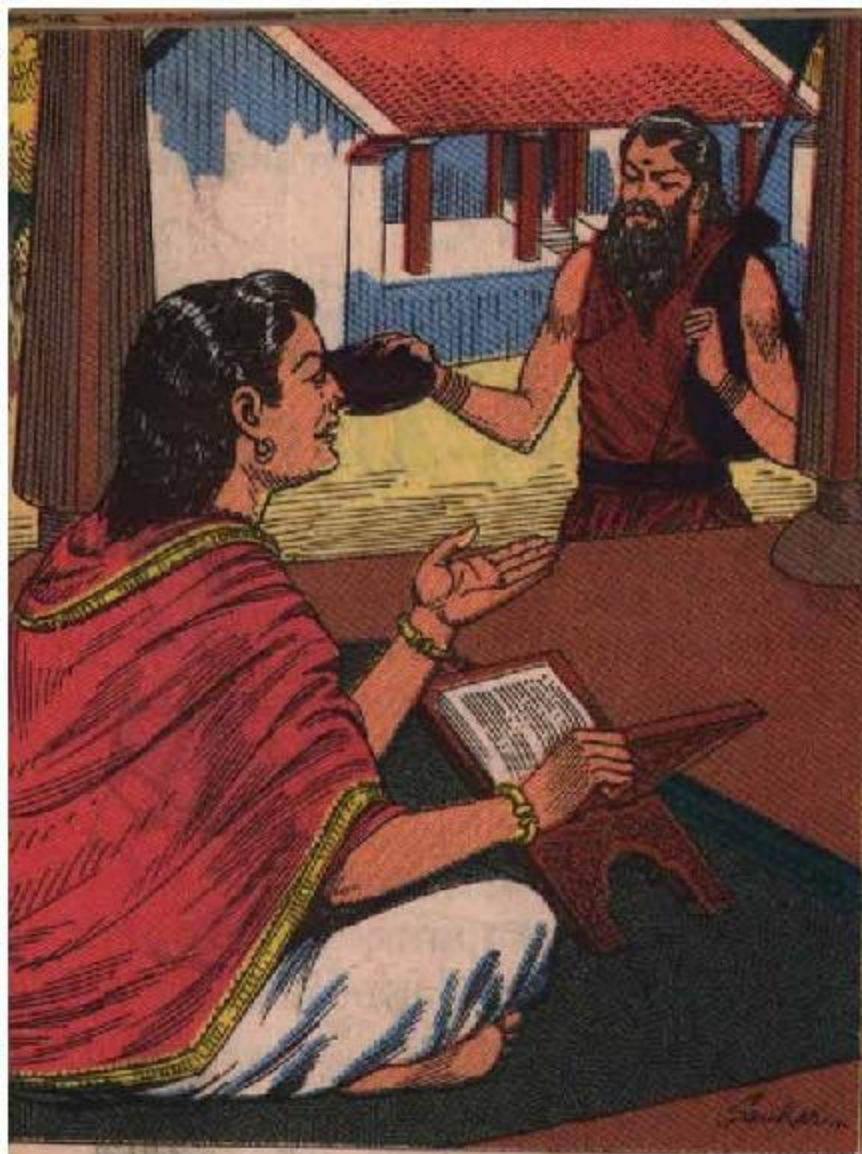
**D**ark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the trees. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits. Flashes of lightning revealed fearsome faces.

But King Vikram did not swerve a bit. He climbed the ancient tree and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying on his shoulder, the vampire that possessed the corpse spoke: "O King, normally you should be enjoying a good sleep at this hour of the night. Instead of doing that, what makes you go through this strange rite? It looks as though you're acting at the behest of some yogi or a wizard. Sometimes, rogues will pose as sanyasis or yogis and take people for a ride. Mind\*you, those wielding real power are few and far between. To prove my statement, I shall tell you a story. Listen carefully." The vampire then began his narration.

There was once a person called Gunasekhar. He was one day sitting







in the porch of his house, reading ancient books. A mendicant came that way. "I'm hungry, sir. Could I have something to eat?"

Gunasekhar looked at him from head to foot for some time, without responding to his request for food. "What benefit would I get if I gave you something?"

The question did not worry the mendicant. "I'm a sanyasi," he replied calmly. "I don't have any desires; or any need for worldly pleasures. If you give me food, you'll be blessed throughout your life. Even when you die, that good deed will continue to bless you. You'll attain salvation."

Gunasekhar was not convinced.

"There are many other ways to earn blessings," he countered. "I can worship god; I can make offerings to the god; I can even read holy books. And none of them will call for any expenditure."

He paused for a while to await the mendicant's reaction, and then continued. "If I've to give you alms, I must get two boons. One, I must enjoy prosperity. Two, my neighbour Gnanasekhar should come a cropper."

The mendicant now spoke. "I can bless you with prosperity, but I cannot cast any curse on your neighbour. Remember one thing. It's a sin to wish misfortune for another person."

Gunasekhar was furious. He shouted at the mendicant. "If that be so, you may go. I don't have anything to give you—food or money."

The mendicant went away silently. All the while, Gunasekhar's wife was listening to the conversation between her husband and the mendicant. "How cruel were you to that man? After all, he had offered to give you one boon, and we could have led a prosperous life. You've no idea what'll happen now. He would go to our neighbour Gnanasekhar and bless him, and we can watch him grow prosperous day by day."

She stared at her husband. "We've lost everything, while our neighbour will gain everything, all because of your stupid behaviour!"



"What do you know!" remarked Gunasekhar, with a derisive laughter. "You're a simpleton! Do you think people like him are sanyasis with magic powers? They go about begging for a morsel of food! Could anyone, who can grant such boons, go about asking for alms? You are merely carried away by his appearance as a sanyasi."

"All right," his wife protested, "then let me ask you something. I hope you've no objection. Why then, did you detain him so long, talking to him? You could have sent him away in the beginning itself."

"Ah! I had my own reason for that," said Gunasekhar. "He had come here hungry for food. I wanted to see whether he would get angry if provoked. Hunger can sometimes turn a man angry. I wanted to prove that."

"Suppose he had granted both boons?" his wife persisted in arguing.

"That's another matter!" retorted Gunasekhar. "Some sanyasis are also capable of doing harm to others. They can curse them. I was trying to find out whether this man had such a capability. I was sure he did not have it."

Meanwhile, the mendicant reached the house of Gnanasekhar. "I'm hungry. Could I have something to eat?" he called out to the hearing of the people inside.

Gnanasekhar came and opened the door. He appeared very happy. He welcomed the sanyasi. "Ah! How



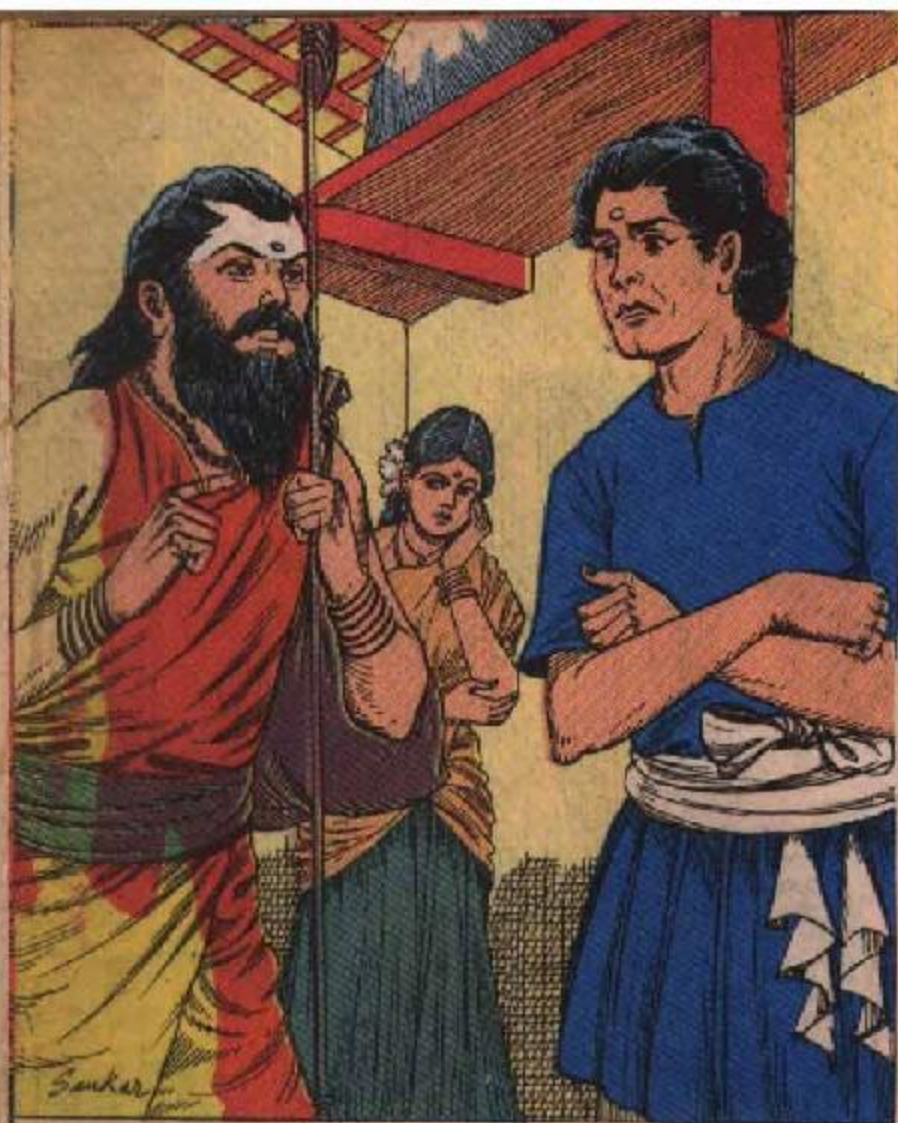
blessed I am! Today is a golden day for me. I was fervently hoping I would see someone like you. And you've come just in time to partake of a feast. My grandfather was a philanthropist. He had distributed all his wealth among the poor. Today we remember that great man. It's his death anniversary. Please join us." He then led the mendicant inside.

After eating the food along with Gnanasekhar and the members of his family, the mendicant expressed his pleasure. "What a sumptuous feast! I'm so happy that I was able to come here today. Please tell me what boon you would like to have. Don't hesitate."

"Swami! It was my good fortune







that I had someone like you to share our joy on this occasion," said Gnanasekhar with folded hands. "I was able to give you a meal. If you're happy and satisfied, I have no desire for anything more."

"Oh! What humility! What modesty!" remarked the mendicant. "But I must say something. Today I was your guest, and you've entertained me without any reservation. A guest is like a god. And it's only proper if the god decides to hand a boon. So, you may unhesitatingly tell me what your wish is. Only after that would I leave this place."

Gnanasekhar was in a dilemma. He consulted his family. "Swami! It's many years since my father passed

away. My mother could not bear the loss and she fell ill, and she is still bedridden. We wish she was once again hale and hearty. If you can grant this wish of ours, that'll be the greatest boon we could think of."

The mendicant thought for a while. "You're really great. You've several good traits, but they are your worst enemies. If you can give up those traits, your mother may regain health. That's the best antidote to her illness. Are you willing to sacrifice something for her sake?"

Gnanasekhar could not understand the significance of what the mendicant said. He remained staring at his face. "Swami! I'm sorry, I don't know what you mean."

The mendicant then praised his family and house and said, "I've a tablet with me. If you were to swallow it and then wish that prosperity should come to you and at the same time it should elude your neighbour, both would come true. If you were to wish for only one of them, even that would not materialise. I shall give you the tablet, and you may wish for two things: one, your mother should regain her health; and two, misfortune should overtake your neighbour. I've a reason for saying this. Your neighbour really wishes that all harm should come to you and there should be a decline in your present prosperity. So, if you were to wish similar things to happen to him, it would not



be any sin. What do you say?"

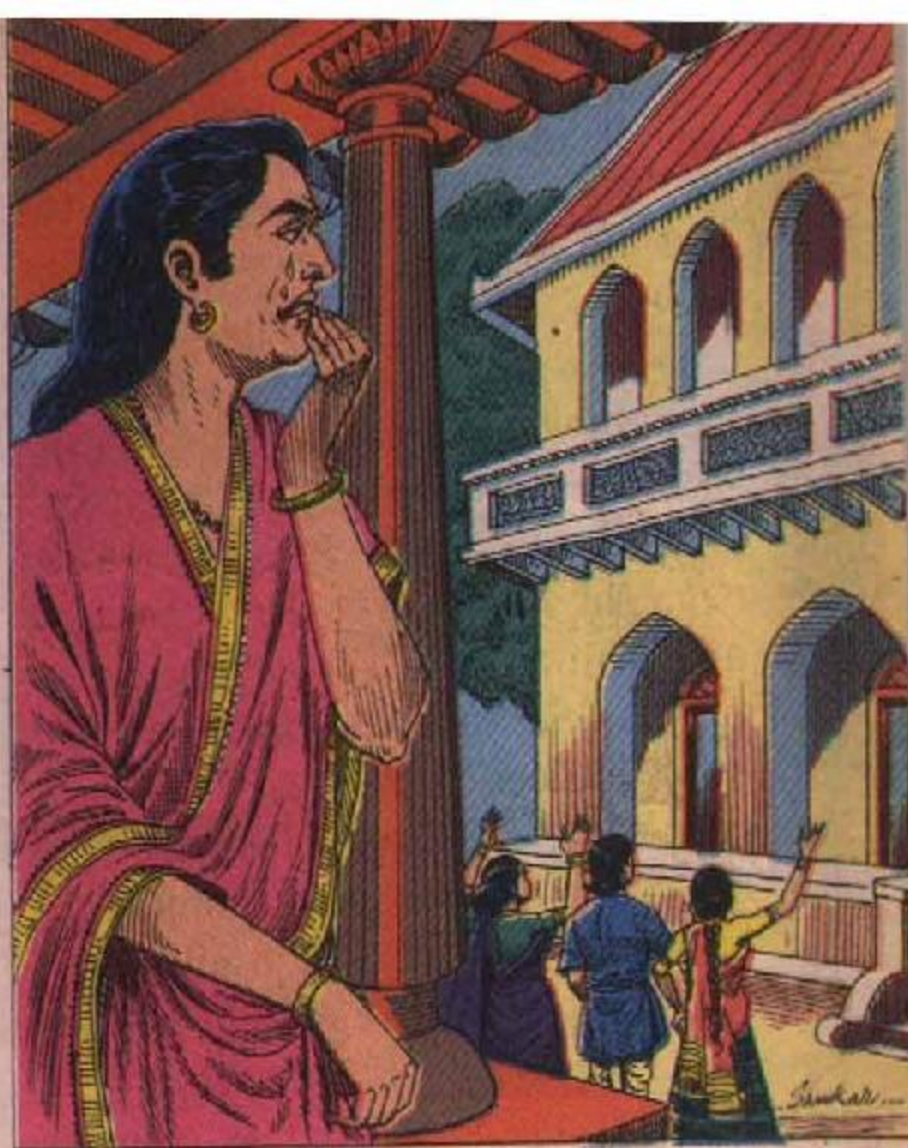
"Swami, you could have given the tablet to him," observed Gnanasekhar. "I would have been only happy to see him prosper. I just cannot think of any harm coming to my neighbour. I don't mind if my mother doesn't recover. We'll just take that in our stride. No, I won't accept that tablet from you."

"Gunasekhar doesn't deserve the tablet," the mendicant insisted. "I can't give it to him. Whereas, you deserve it very much. Please take it. You'll become more prosperous. Neighbours like Gunasekhar, who don't mean well for you, will soon go away. If you don't accept the tablet from me, I'll take it as an insult." The mendicant placed the tablet in Gnanasekhar's palm and went away.

Now Gnanasekhar was in a worse dilemma. Having accepted the tablet, he did not want to throw it away. So, he swallowed it and said loudly: "Let my mother recover from her illness! Let this house become a bungalow!"

His wife reminded him. "Didn't he tell you that the second wish should be something damaging to our neighbour? If you change from that, even the first wish will not be fulfilled. We may even suffer setbacks."

Gnanasekhar did not argue with her, because to their great surprise, his mother got up from her bed and walked towards them by herself. She appeared to be quite well. Everybody was happy. "Mother, you're no longer



ill! We're all greatly relieved."

Before they realised what was happening, their modest house now looked like a little bungalow. Everybody rushed out to take a good look at the two-storeyed building. Even the passers-by stopped to stare at the building, which had sprung up just like that. Among the onlookers was Gunasekhar. There was a look of wonder on his face; there was a tinge of jealousy when he heaved a heavy sigh.

The vampire concluded his narration there, and turned to King Vikramaditya. "O King! I've a doubt. The mendicant came as a beggar and asked for food as he was hungry. But he was no ordinary beggar; he pos-





sessed some extraordinary powers. He gave a tablet to Gnanasekhar. He told him he could wish for prosperity for himself and misfortune for another, and that both would materialise. He also warned him that if he were to wish for only one of them, even that wish would not be fulfilled; moreover, he might even be visited by misfortune. Gnanasekhar was aware of the import of these directions, still he swallowed the pill and wished for two things, both of which were to bring happiness and contentment to him. He was thus not heeding the warning given to him by the mendicant. However, both his wishes were fulfilled, and no harm came to him as predicted by the mendicant. How would you explain this anomaly? If you know the answer and yet do not satisfy me, need I warn you what'll happen to you? Your head will be blown to pieces!"

Vikramaditya thought for a while

and said, "Both the mendicant and Gnanasekhar were noble-hearted persons. Even though Gunasekhar refused to give any food or alms to the mendicant, he did not curse him. That shows his greatness. Gnanasekhar was one who would not harm another person. So, he wished for only his own happiness and prosperity. The mendicant was really testing him. He was certain that Gnanasekhar would never want any harm come to another person. Such a person need not be afraid of anybody or anything. That's how Gnanasekhar came out successful in the test. He firmly believed that it is always better to wish for good things for oneself than bad things to happen to others."

The vampire realised that Vikramaditya had outsmarted him again. He flew back to the ancient city, carrying the corpse with him. The king drew his sword and went after the vampire.





## A Feeling of Optimism

**\* "I would like to know the meaning of the proverb 'every cloud has a silver lining'" – writes G. Gayatri, of Curnency Nagar, Vijayawada.**

A silver lining is an indication that a bad situation will not continue. Whenever the sun shines behind a cloud, the sunlight can be seen as a lining around the cloud. When the cloud moves away, the sun comes out shedding its bright light in all its glory. Hence the saying, every cloud has a silver lining, because as the cloud moves away, the darkness it creates temporarily will fade away. The proverb advises everybody to be optimistic about the future.

**\* Reader A.K. Basu, of Sheikhpura, Midnapore, wants to know the meaning of two Latin phrases –note verbale and numero uno – that he often comes across in newspapers.**

'Verbale' in English is verbal or something spoken. In administrative language, the expression means a note (carrying an opinion or a direction) given verbally, and not a written note, which can always be authenticated, whereas a verbal note ordinarily will have no proof. 'Numero uno' simply means Number One, indicating a top position.

**\* What is meant by 'Brainwash'? asks Sanjeev Varghese, of Bangalore.**

Brainwashing is the act of subjecting a person to mental pressure with the object of making him change his views or confessing to a crime. This is done by continually telling him something different from what he believes to be correct or true, or showing evidence as if it is true. In short, a systematic attempt to change what a person thinks or believes in by methods which need not be violent.

**\* Reader Srinivasa Rao Karra, of Hyderabad, wants to know the difference between 'war' and 'battle'.**

War is a state of confrontation between two countries, whereas a battle is the actual action when the armies of the two warring countries meet on the field or 'front'. In 1971, India and Pakistan were at war with each other when battles were fought on the western front and the eastern front. Shall we say, we wage a war but fight a battle?

*Readers are requested to avoid asking questions like "What is the difference?" or seeking meanings of words or usages which can be found in any good dictionary.*

**–Editor**



# SPORTS SNIPPETS

## A tennis prodigy

In the record books, Martina Hingis of Switzerland is the youngest (15 years) winner of a Wimbledon title. She partnered Helena Sukova to win the Women's Doubles at Wimbledon



last July. Though earlier she went down to Steffi Graf in the pre-quarter finals, tennis enthusiasts ventured to describe her as "Martina of the future", as the indomitable Martina Navratilova ("of the past") has retired from professional tennis. In the Italian Open later, Hingis had her revenge, when she beat Steffi in what has come to be called "the shocker of the year". A week after her 16th birthday in October, she won the Women's

Singles title at the Filderstadt tournament in Germany, and went on to win the title at Oakland, California, where she beat Monica Seles, 6-2, 6-0 in a 52-minute final. "She will be a force in women's tennis," remarked Seles. "She's so young, and she'll only get better and stronger." In the last tournament of this season—the Chase Championships in New York—Graf beat Hingis 6-3, 4-6, 6-0, 4-6, 6-0. Based on computer standings, Hingis is placed at 7, behind Graf (1) and Seles (2).



## Farewell to tennis

World Number One Stefan Edberg bid farewell to professional tennis from his home country. He was playing in the Davis Cup Final in Malmo, Sweden, against Cedric Pioline of France. The Frenchman won.



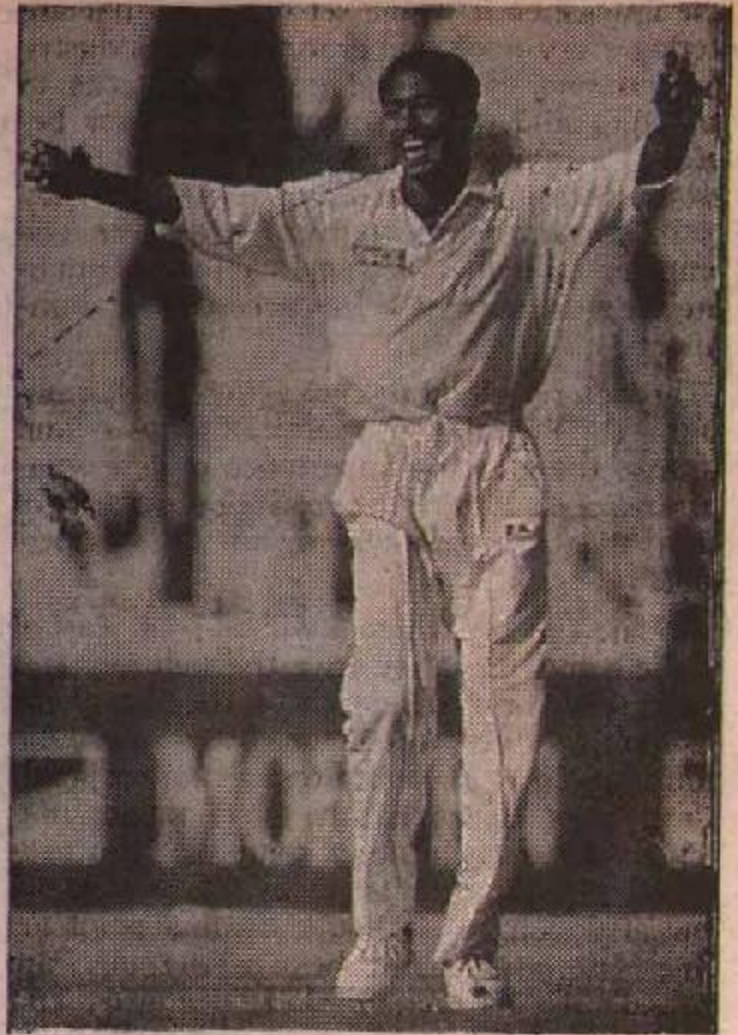


### Portrait on bat

Autographed cricket bats, though common, are prized possessions. How prized will it be if a bat were to carry a portrait *and* an autograph? Well the price of such a bat will be nearly Rs 30,000; it will have a hand-painted portrait in oil of Sunil Gavaskar, India's "Little Master". An Australian company is making these bats, which will carry his autograph as well.

### Century on debut

Pakistan's Mohammed Wasim became the 62nd batsman in the world to score a century on his Test debut. He was 109 not out against New Zealand at Lahore on November 24. He was the fourth Pakistani batsman to make a century on his first Test appearance. R.E. Foster of England scored 287 against Australia at Sydney in 1903-1904—the highest score by a debutante.



Lawrence Rowe of W.Indies is the only batsman to make centuries in both innings of a Test—214 and 100 not out—against New Zealand at Kingston in 1971-72.

On his Test debut, another Pakistani, Mohammed Zahid, took 11 wickets—4 in the first and 7 in the second innings, on December 1, to join a group of 13 cricketers who have taken 10 or more wickets on their first appearance. Incidentally, the world record is held by Narendra Hirwani of India, who took 16 wickets for 136 runs in 1987-88. Bob Massie of Australia, too, took 16 wickets, but he conceded one run extra—137. This was in 1972.



# A MOTHER'S LAST WISH



**S**ridhar and daughter Kamala were staying in a rented house. The girl was only five years old when her mother passed away. The responsibility of bringing her up then fell on Sridhar's shoulders. He looked after her as best as he could within the meagre income he was earning. She grew up and it was now time she was given away in marriage. But a wedding meant money, and Sridhar wondered from where he would collect all the money needed for her marriage.

Suddenly, he faced another problem. Their house owner called on him, and told him that he was raising the rent. "Sridhar, you've been paying me only a hundred rupees for a long time. That's too little for this house. So, I want you to pay me two hundred rupees from now on. I shall come

back in the evening for the advance rent. If you don't want to pay me that much, you may leave this place. Otherwise, I'll throw out all your things!"

"That's unfair, sir!" pleaded Sridhar. "You can't raise the rent to double of what I'm paying now. Where else shall I go! I'm a poor man!"

"I don't want to hear all such excuses and explanations!" said the landlord. "If you're willing to pay what I've asked for, you may continue to stay here. But if you want a place for a low rent, why don't you go and stay in that haunted house of Mangamma?"

Sridhar realised that his house owner was being adamant. "All right, I shall give you my decision by evening." After seeing off the man, Sridhar also got ready to go for work.

After he, too, went away, Kamala





got out in search of a house. She knew that they could not afford a high rent. So, she went in search of the haunted house. Mangamma was generous by nature. If she came across anybody suffering from want, she went all out to help him or her. It was now three years since she died. Her son Gopal continued to stay in the house. There was a maid to cook food for him, besides a few other servants.

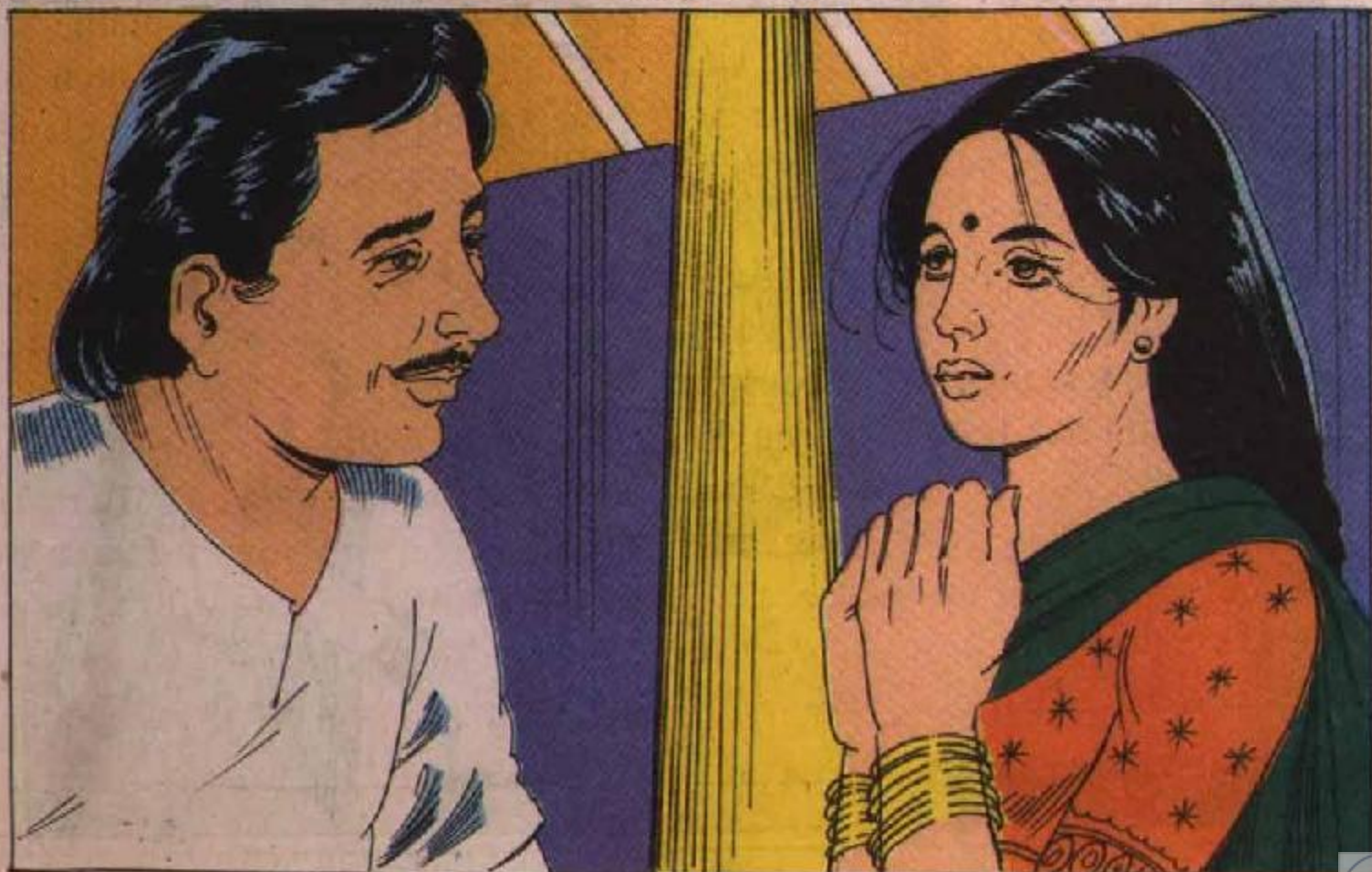
Three months after Mangamma died, one night the servants saw an apparition and they thought it was Mangamma. The next morning, they all left the place telling Gopal that they would not like to live in a haunted house. He was left all alone.

Kamala gathered all this information before she went to that place. Undaunted, she knocked on the door. Gopal was about to go out, locking

the house. She told him of their predicament. He felt pity for the girl and her father. The son, like his mother, was kind-hearted. "Of course, I've a portion to let out. You can have it, and I'll continue to stay in the other portion. You must have already heard about this place - that it is haunted, that my mother's ghost makes its appearance every now and then, and all that. So, only if you don't have any objection, you may come and stay here."

"For that matter, we don't believe in ghosts!" said Kamala. "We only don't want living beings to bother us!"

Gopal smiled. He handed the key to her and went away. Kamala took a good look at the portion they would be occupying. She removed all cobwebs, swept the floor, and mopped it





clean. She then engaged a vehicle, went home, packed up their belongings and carted them to the new house. She then went back and waited for her father.

When he came, she led him to Mangamma's house. He was cross with her. "You should have told me before you shifted to this place," he said angrily. "Where shall we go from here? It's not that easy to get a good place."

Kamala calmly told him, "Father, don't you remember what the landlord said this morning? He raised the rent to double, and if we didn't pay him the advance rent by evening, he even threatened to throw our things out. It would have been a shame for us, and for nobody else. We've our prestige even though we have no house of our own and can stay only in

arented place. Who's better – such a landlord or a ghost?"

Sridhar now calmed down. "What you say is correct, Kamala," he confessed. "You've done the right thing. I'm unable to earn more, and to afford a higher rent. However, I shall search for a better place. Till then, we shall stay here."

Soon afterwards, Kamala went into the kitchen to prepare food for herself and her father. Suddenly she heard a voice, but could not locate from where it was coming. It was a woman's voice. "I can't remain silent any longer," the voice said.

Kamala stared at one corner where she had placed a wooden seat for her father to sit down. She saw a faint figure of a woman sitting there. She surmised it must be the ghost of Mangamma. She was not afraid. She





smiled and said, "Could I ask you something? When you were alive, you used to help everybody in many ways. That's what people say without any reservation. You were so kind-hearted. If that was so, then why should you now scare people in the guise of a ghost? Gopal is your only son. Should he live all alone in this big house? Isn't it unfair?"

The ghost was heard to heave a heavy sigh. "What you've heard is true, but..." it paused for a while.

"Yes, go on," Kamala prompted the ghost.

"I had wished that my son would marry before I died. He, however, went on postponing a decision. I don't know why. I was disappointed. It was out of sheer frustration that I died prematurely. As I still had some desires unfulfilled, I turned into a ghost, hovering around this place. How could I be separated from my only son? That tamarind outside, I've taken abode on that tree. When night comes, I come inside the house and inspect every room. I saw his servants cheating him, and looting him. That's when I decided to interfere. When I appeared before them, they ran away from here, and spread the rumour that this is a haunted house."

Just then there was a knock on the door. As Kamala moved to go and open the door, the ghost hurriedly disappeared. Two or three days later, Sridhar came back from work and



told his daughter that he had been able to locate a house. "We shall move out of this haunted place and go over to that house."

Kamala noticed that Gopal was listening to their conversation. A shadow of sorrow had fallen on his face.

"You may start packing," Sridhar instructed Kamala before he went for his bath. When he reached the well, the ghost jumped down from the tamarind tree and stood before him. Sridhar was stunned. He began to tremble; his legs shook.

"Sridhar, don't be afraid, I won't harm you," the ghost assured him. "I was Mangamma when I was alive. Have you forgotten all the help that I





had given you? I've told your daughter what made me turn into a ghost. You can ask her. I heard your telling her that you want to shift from here. I was upset. Have you noticed how happy my son is ever since you started staying here? He's once again smiling and laughing. All that should continue. If you both were to go away, then he'll once again become morose and gloomy. He must have a wife. Why don't you marry your daughter to him? This house will then belong to them, and he'll look after her well. And once they get married, I shall vanish from here. I won't remain a ghost any longer. I shall get my salvation then."

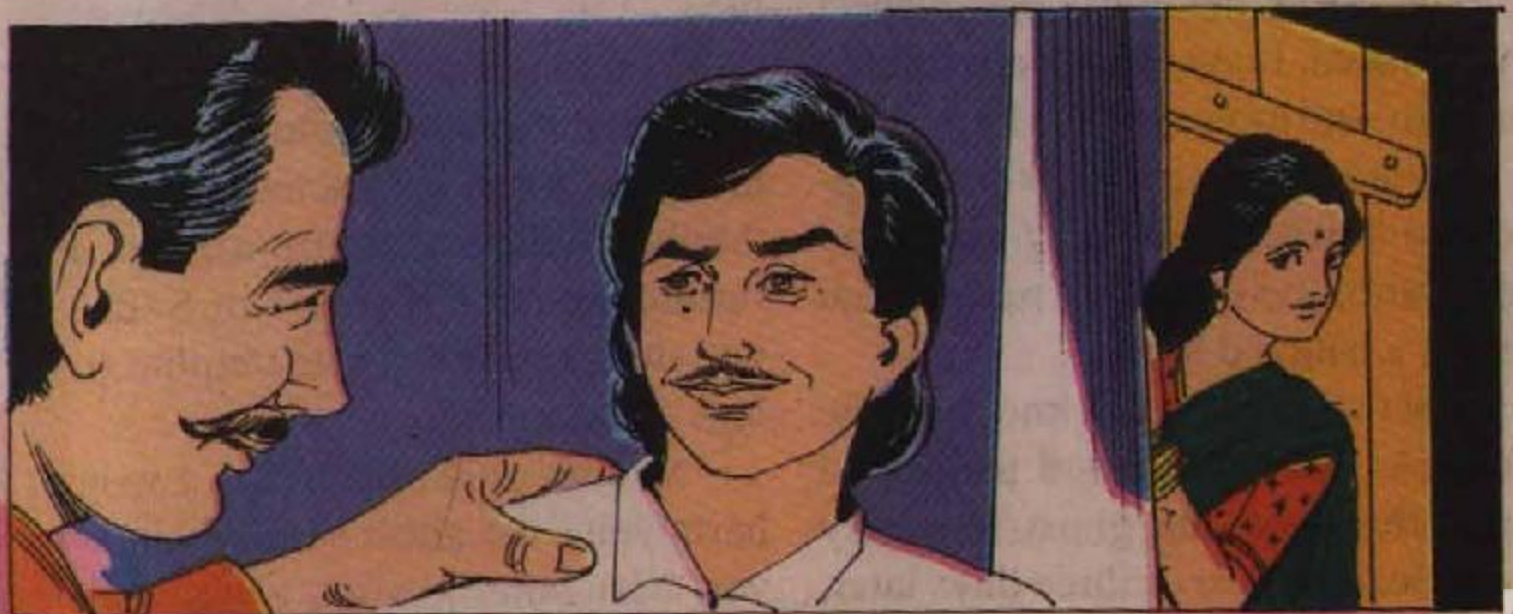
"Of course, Mangamma, I do remember all the help you had extended to me," said Sridhar. "I'm grateful to you for all that. I cannot reject your wish. Let it be so."

"Ah! How happy I am!" cried the ghost in ecstasy. "I'm quite satisfied." It then disappeared.

Sridhar soon finished his bath and sought out Gopal, who was still sitting gloomily in one corner of the house. "Gopal, you seem to be upset over the prospect of our shifting from here. Have you any objection if my daughter were to remain in this house for ever? I propose to give her in marriage to you, and later go on a pilgrimage to Kasi, Rameswaram, and other holy places."

"Let your wish be fulfilled, sir," said Gopal, standing up from his seat. "It was my desire, too - that your daughter became my wife." He continued after a pause. "But why should you leave this place after our marriage? There're plenty of rooms here, and you can remain with us for ever, giving us company and your guidance and advice. You should not leave us alone."

Thus, a mother's last wish was fulfilled. Soon, the marriage of Kamala and Gopal took place in a grand manner.





## THE RUSE WORKED!



**R**ajmohan of Rajgiri was very hospitable. If anybody were to visit him, he would offer his hospitality and provide facilities for their stay in his house for any length of time. However, nobody stayed for more than a day or two or three days. Except one of his own relations, Manohar remained in Rajmohan's house for a full week. He never doubted if such a long stay would not inconvenience the others in the family. They just tolerated his presence. He made himself comfortable and enjoyed his long stay.

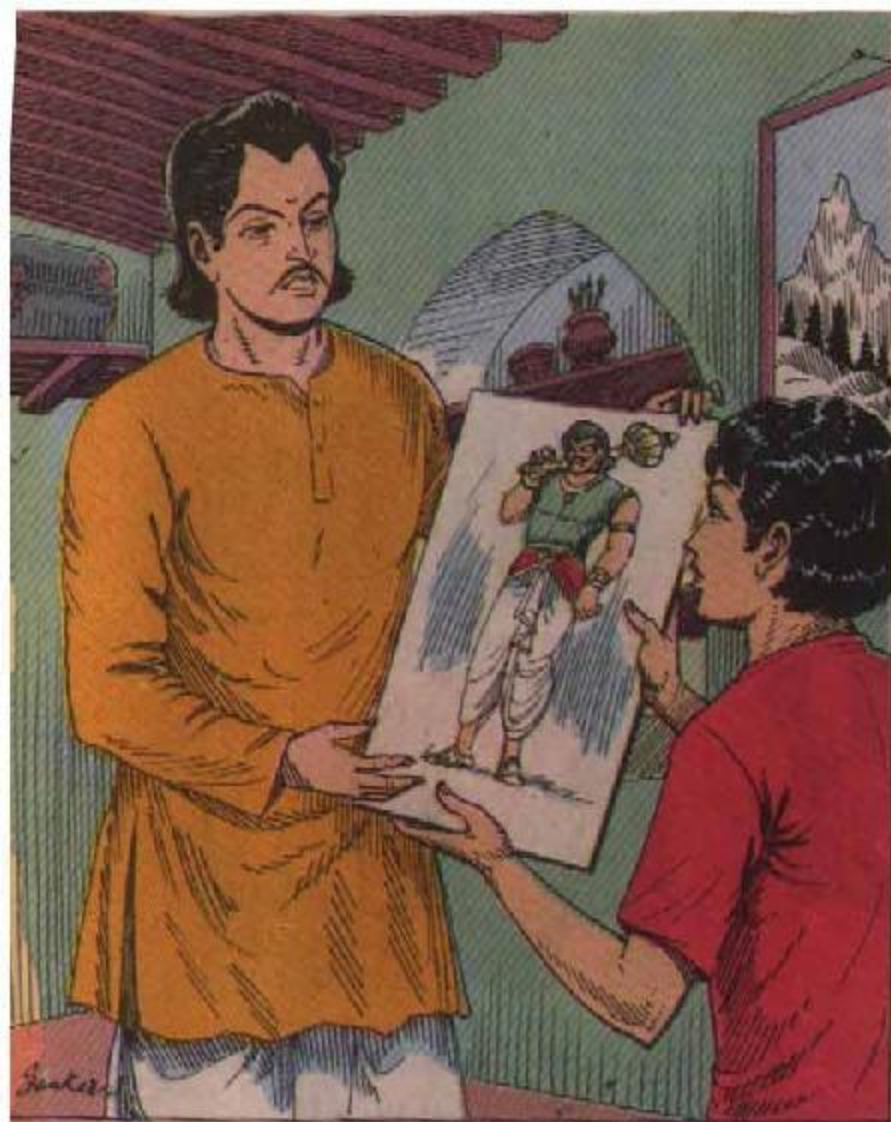
Manohar had the habit of teasing everybody and deriving pleasure out of their predicament. One day, Rajmohan's son Kumar drew a picture of a horse, and showed it to their guest. "What picture is this?" Manohar

made fun of the boy. "Do you call this a horse? It looks like a donkey!"

Everybody in the room laughed on hearing Manohar's remarks. Kumar felt ashamed of himself. "Kumar, you seem to have imagined a donkey when you drew the horse. Do it the other way round. Imagine a horse and draw a donkey. It won't be a donkey, but a horse!" added Manohar. There was again a loud laughter from everybody in the room.

Kumar's parents and some other family members did not quite approve of Manohar's pranks. They were angry with him, but did not want to show any discourtesy to him. So, they kept quiet. Kumar took his drawing to their neighbour. "Did you draw this, Kumar?" asked Raghav. "It's very good. The horse looks real."





Kumar was happy. There was at least one person who complimented his talents. But he had a doubt. "Why then does Uncle say that this is a donkey and not a horse?"

Raghav consoled him. "Who? Manohar? He's just being mischievous. Don't worry. You can come here and draw your pictures. I shall guide you."

Kumar from then on would go to his neighbour's house whenever he felt like drawing pictures. Of course, he would show them to Manohar, who always had some critical comments to make fun of the boy.

Raghav one day asked him, "What does your uncle say these days?"

"He continues to find fault with my drawings," said Kumar. "If I draw

a dog, he would call it a duck; if I draw a youngster, he would say he looks like an old man!"

"All right, I shall make a drawing and give it to you," said Raghav. "Don't show it to Manohar; show it to the others first. He would grab it from you and look at it. You can then watch his reaction."

Raghav was a fairly good artist. He drew a portrait of Manohar himself and gave it to Kumar. As instructed, the boy took it to his father first. "It's a pig!" remarked Rajmohan. "It looks like a lazy donkey!" opined Kumar's mother. "I think it's a picture of an old buffalo," commented Kumar's grandfather.

Kumar showed it to everybody in the room, and none of them said the portrait was that of Manohar. He was intrigued. Why did Kumar not show the picture to him first, as was his practice? "Everybody seems to have a different opinion. Let me see it, Kumar. I'll tell you what exactly it is."

"No, Uncle, you'll have something to say about it to make fun of me," said Kumar, feigning shyness.

However, Manohar managed to take it from his hands. He was surprised. It was his portrait, still it was described varyingly as a pig, a donkey, a buffalo, and many other things. He suddenly fell silent. He knew he had earned the displeasure of the family, all because of his mischievous behaviour. He had tried





to make fun of a little boy in front of all others; now they got an opportunity to mock at him. He packed his box and left the place.

After he had left, Kumar's grandfather called him and said, "Kumar, we were all in a dilemma, and you saved the situation. Your drawing spoke for all of us! He has gone away without uttering a word!"

Kumar did not know what to say. The picture was not his handiwork. Just then, Raghav came there. "Your little grandson has a lot of talents. But

still he felt discouraged by the criticism made by your relation, Manohar. That's not what elders should do. They must encourage young talents. Whatever he drew did not elicit any good word from Manohar. Then I thought off this practical joke. And it had its effect. Kumar has a bright future. Wait till he becomes a talented artist."

"We'll do our best to encourage him," said Rajmohan, who was listening to what Raghav was telling his father.

- Adversity introduces a man to himself.
- It is disgraceful to stumble twice against the same stone.
- The borrower is a servant to the lender.
- Clothes maketh the man.
- Compliments are only lies in court clothes.
- The best throw with the dice is to throw them away.



# TIT FOR TAT



**K**asinath was an eminent *pundit* of Kanakapura. Once he had to go to Kantapura. The route was through a jungle. There was a proper footpath but he did not want to attempt a journey all alone. He thought he would go by horse-cart, though it would have meant a round-about way.

Bangaru owned a horse-cart. Kasinath decided to engage him. The cart could carry five passengers. So he told Kasinath that he should have at least four paying passengers to earn some income. He would not take the vehicle out for just one passenger. Fortunately, the day Kasinath wanted to travel, there were three more passengers wanting to go to Kantapura.

When Bangaru brought the carriage to Kasinath's house, the other three were already inside. Kasinath

carried a trunk and a *surahi* (water pot). Bangaru made space for the trunk beneath the vehicle where he had kept the grass and other eats for the horse. Kasinath got into the cart with the *surahi*. Chandraswami and Rudramurthi sat behind the driver, while Parameshwar sat next to Kasinath.

The journey began. After some time Kasinath wished to stretch his legs. As he did so, his leg touched the box Parameshwar had kept by his side. In fact, Kasinath even tried to push the box a little with his leg. Its owner did not quite approve of all this exercise. "Hey! Pundit!" he cautioned Kasinath. "The box contains an idol. Please don't show irreverence to it."

Kasinath folded his hands to show respect to the sacred contents inside.



He then crossed his legs as before. But he could not continue in that posture for long. "Sir, please move the box to your side. Then I'll be able to stretch my legs. All of you are stretching your legs. My legs pain when I sit cross-legged."

Parameshwar did not move the box to his side. "I can't do as you wish. The box contains precious articles. It must be in my full view." In fact, he pushed it a little more towards Kasinath, who then leaned on it.

"Sir, there are some glass items inside. If you lean like that, they may break," said Parameshwar.

"What kind of box is this?" Kasinath protested. "Is it made of mat? But it's hard wood, and nothing will happen to the contents!"

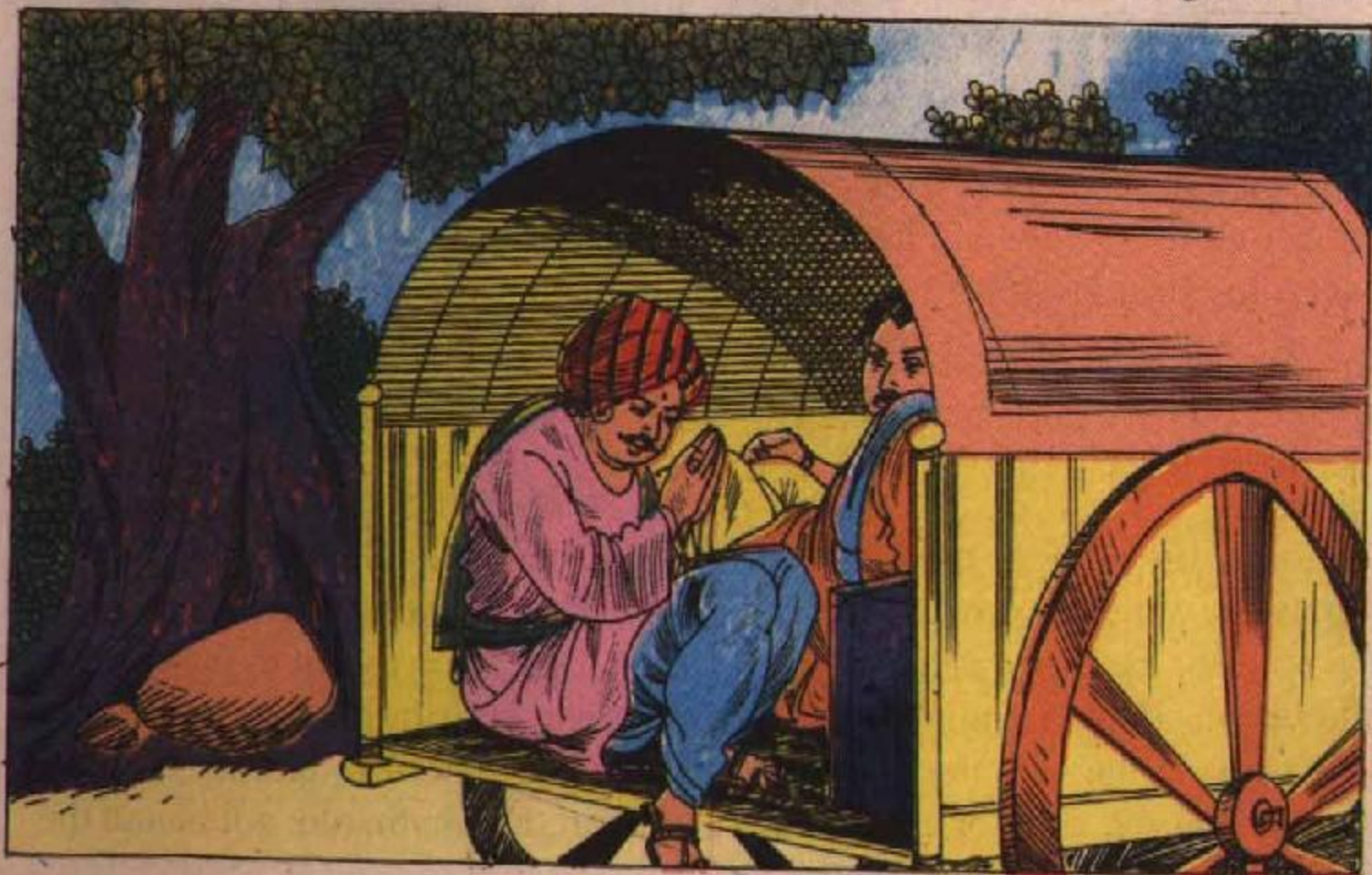
"The glass items are on top of the box, and if you lean hard, they will all

break into pieces." The man looked askance at Kasinath, and continued, "When people travel together, nobody should cause discomfort to the others. Aren't you aware of this simple manners?"

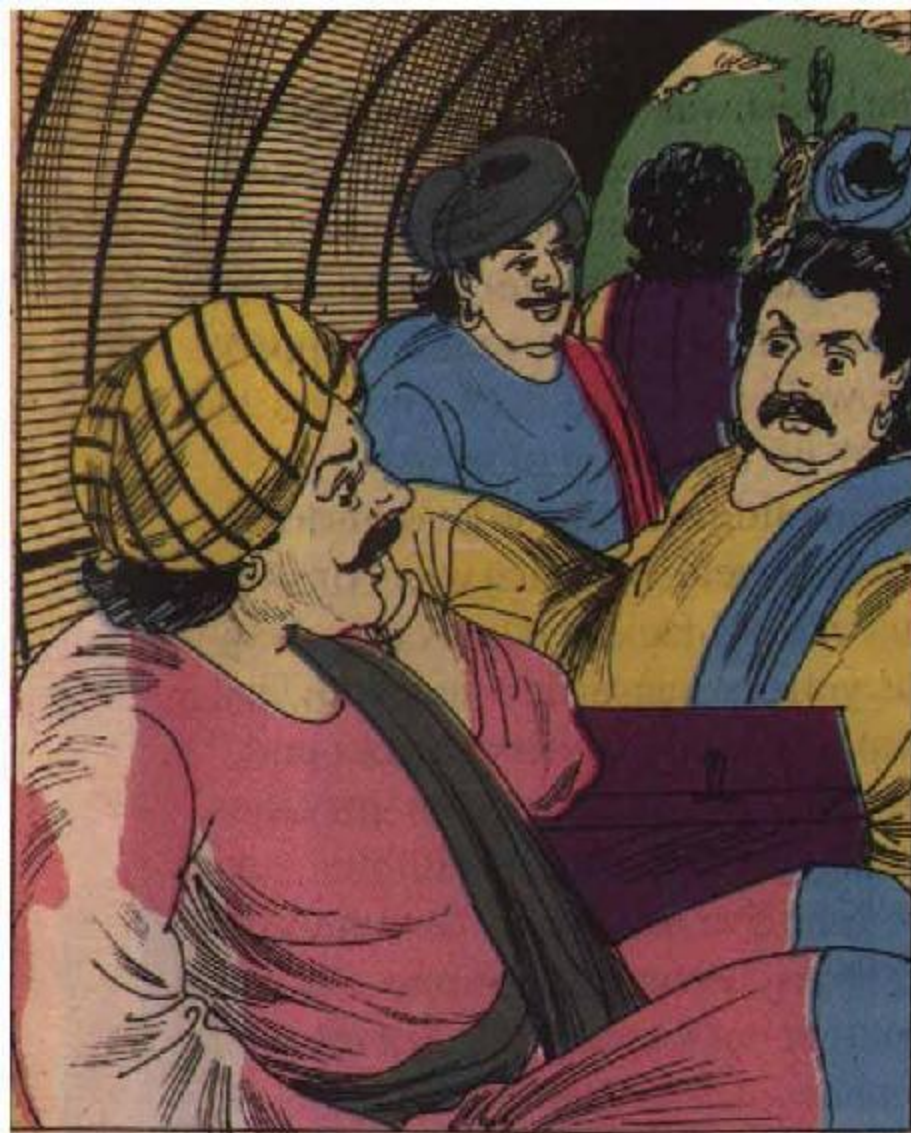
"That's what I'm also saying," Kasinath tried to defend himself. "You're well aware that your box does not allow me to stretch my legs. Why do you carry it inside the cart? That was not good manners on your part."

"As the box contains precious items, it must remain with me," explained Parameshwar. "It cannot be kept anywhere else. Suppose it was another passenger, instead of my box; would you have stretched your legs to his lap? So, imagine that you're travelling with a fourth passenger."

"You may have a point there," agreed Kasinath, but he argued, "it is







a box, and not a passenger. You can very well keep it on your lap."

Parameshwar remained silent. Kasinath thought there was no point in continuing the argument, so he too kept quiet for some time. A while later, Parameshwar pulled out a cigarette from his pocket and held it between his lips. He felt for a match-box in his pocket. He had forgotten to keep one. He asked the others. None of them carried a match-box with him.

Some time later, Kasinath felt thirsty. He wanted to drink water from the pot. But the cart was moving fast and he was afraid he might spill the water inside the vehicle. "Bangaru, please stop the cart for a minute. I

would like to drink some water."

Parameshwar objected. "No, you can't stop! I'm in a hurry to reach Kantapura. He won't die if he doesn't drink a drop of water. I'm not able to light my cigarette and I too am feeling bad. Let him suppress his thirst."

Kasinath was by now very angry. He wanted to teach him a lesson. They went past a person on the road who was smoking a cigarette. Kasinath turned to Parameshwar. "You can light your cigarette now."

Parameshwar was happy. "Bangaru, stop the vehicle. Let me light my cigarette." Turning to Kasinath he said, "Pundit-ji, you may drink water now. By that time I shall come back after lighting my cigarette. Why, you can even get out of the vehicle and stretch your legs."

Bangaru stopped the vehicle. Parameshwar got down to approach the passer-by. Kasinath, too, got out of the cart. He drank some water. The man on the road recognised Kasinath, dropped his cigarette, and greeted Kasinath with great respect. He responded by patting his shoulders and exchanging pleasantries. "Did you throw away your cigarette? In fact, we stopped the vehicle so that my friend here could light his cigarette."

Parameshwar heard the conversation. "No, I don't want to pick up the cigarette from the road. I would better go without a smoke." He then climbed the cart. Kasinath, too, got in and the



vehicle proceeded on its journey. "Sorry, you couldn't smoke. But thanks to you, I could take a drink," said Kasinath.

After some time, a procession came their way. A man in the centre was holding a lighted lamp. "You may stop the vehicle, and go and light your cigarette now," said Kasinath.

"Bangaru, please stop the vehicle. Let me light my cigarette," Parameshwar alighted from the cart with a wide smile on his face. He went near the procession and asked someone, "Could I light my cigarette from the lamp?"

The man looked horrified. "Light a cigarette from a sacred lamp?" he exclaimed. "This is a temple procession, and we're carrying our Devi's idol!"

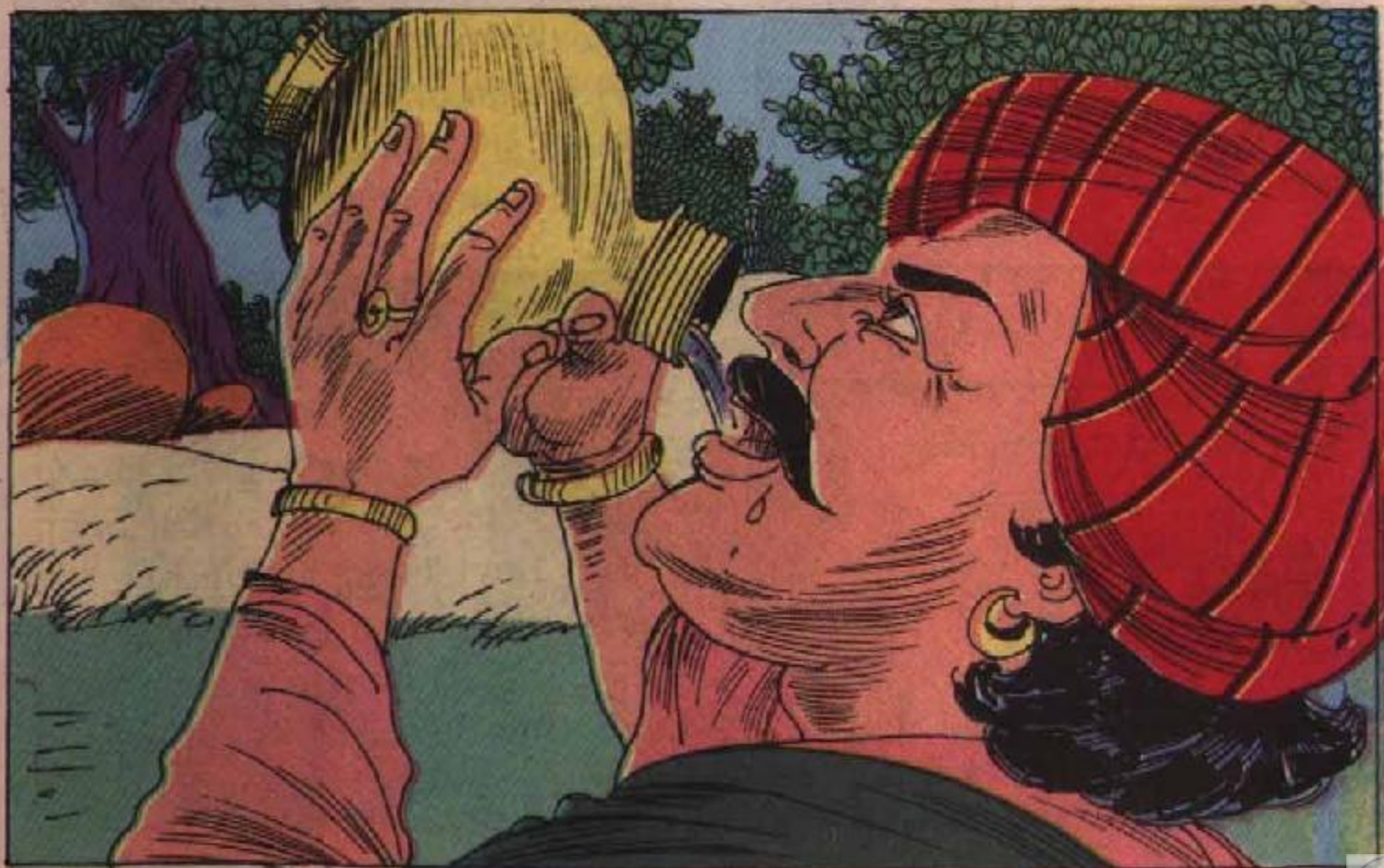
"Sorry, I didn't know," said

Parameshwar and went back to the cart, shamefacedly.

They had not gone far when they came across another procession. Parameshwar had the vehicle stopped. He went up to the man who was in front of the procession, carrying a lamp inside a small pot. Parameshwar suddenly realised that it was a funeral procession! He did not want to cut a sorry figure a second time. So, he coolly retraced his steps and joined the cart. "Why, what happened?" queried Kasinath.

"Oh! That was funeral procession," answered Parameshwar and fell silent. But not for long. Because he saw a man on the wayside roasting something. He stopped the vehicle again and got out. "I hope you'll be lucky at least now," remarked Kasinath.

Parameshwar discovered that the





man was roasting meat! He could not stand the smell. So, he almost ran back to the cart. When Kasinath found out what had made Parameshwar rush back, he consoled him, "Don't worry, you'll be able to light your cigarette as we go along."

The cart moved on once again. Suddenly, a passer-by recognised Kasinath and stopped the vehicle and greeted the pundit with great respect. He spoke to the man for a little while. Before he took leave of him, Kasinath asked him, "By the way, do you have a match-box? My friend here has been wanting to light his cigarette very badly."

The man fished out a match-box and gave it to him. "Let him keep it, I shall get another one."

The cart moved forward and Kasinath handed the match-box to Parameshwar. However, when he was about to light the cigarette, Kasinath objected. "I don't like the smell of cigarette smoke. Please don't light

it!"

"Is that so?" said Parameshwar. "But you didn't tell me till now. All right, we'll stop the vehicle. I'll take a puff or two and then join you all in a minute."

"That's not at all possible," remarked Kasinath. "Even now we're late. I must reach Kantapura before the auspicious time starts. We cannot stop on the way for little things."

"But we did stop the vehicle, so that you could drink water, didn't we?" Parameshwar argued.

"Yes, we did, but it was you who stopped the vehicle to light your cigarette," responded Kasinath. "You yourself said no one should cause inconvenience to his co-passengers. Now you're breaking the same rule. If you don't smoke, you're not going to die the next moment."

The others in the vehicle laughed aloud. Parameshwar dropped his head in shame, and remained silent till they reached Kantapura.







**Distinguish between ordinary twins and Siamese twins.**

*-Rupesh Shinde, Nipani*

When two babies are born in the same birth one after the other, they are normal twins. However, if they are joined together at some part – head, face, chest, stomach – and come out of the mother's womb at the same time, they are called Siamese twins. Two male Chinese – Chang and Eng – were born in Siam (now Thailand) in 1814; they were joined by a thick fleshy ligament at the waist. These days such twins can be surgically separated.

**Is it true that listening to the Radio for a long stretch of time can cause psychological disorders?**

*-U. Murali, Vijalapuram*

The scientific world does not believe in such an apprehension. After all, the listener will choose the programmes he or she wants to listen. One does not normally switch on the radio from morning till evening, though the Radio generally gives out a variety of programmes which do not cause monotony.

**We know that water is heavier than air. How does the water in the clouds float in air?**

*-N. Ravikumar, Vijayawada*

There is only water vapour in the clouds, and it is not as dense as water on the land. Any gaseous form of liquid is vapour; a cloud is a mass of condensed water vapour.

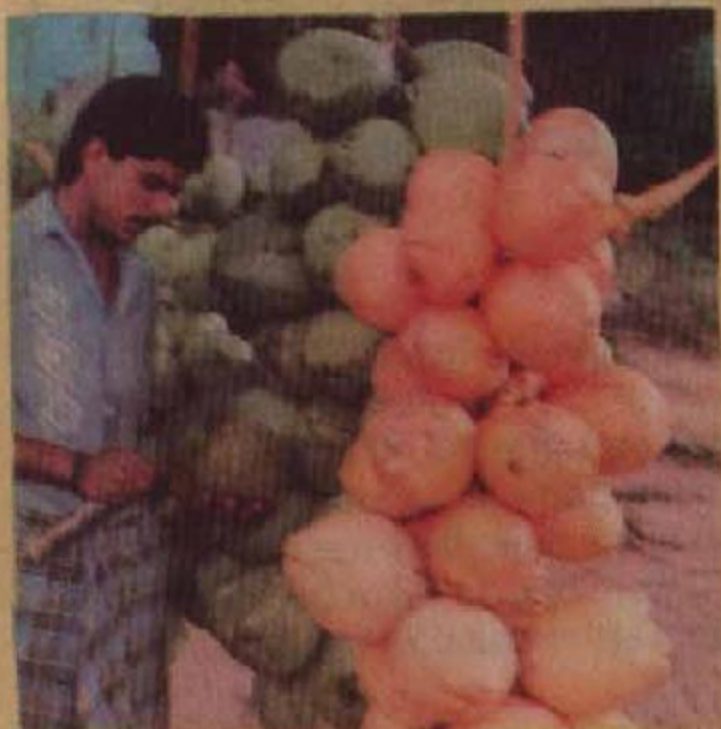
#### **FROM OUR MAIL**

I have been a regular reader of this famous magazine. I have some suggestions: The stories and articles should have inner meanings that will have the capacity to touch the human mind deeply. More mythological stories are welcome. During the '80s, there used to be an "immortal message" every month on the opening page of every issue. A message of that kind is extremely essential for the present depraved society of ours. India's rich cultural heritage, and the peace and tranquillity that prevailed in the past must be made prominent in the contents. Kindly make *Chandamama* as much traditional and rustic as possible, protecting it from the 'encroachment' of modern culture and society. Include more of humble village life, and make the pictures more realistic and highly decorative than ever.

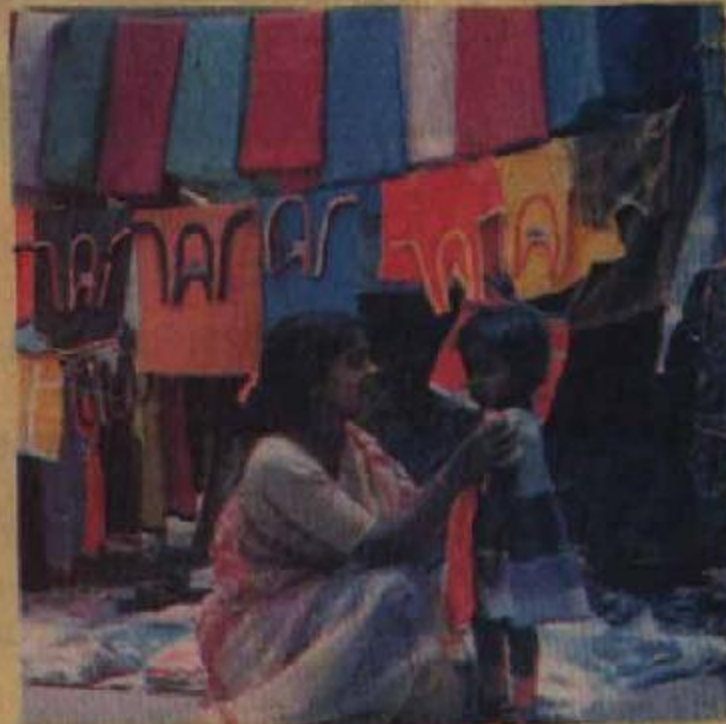
*- Dipankar Dey, Calcutta.*



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